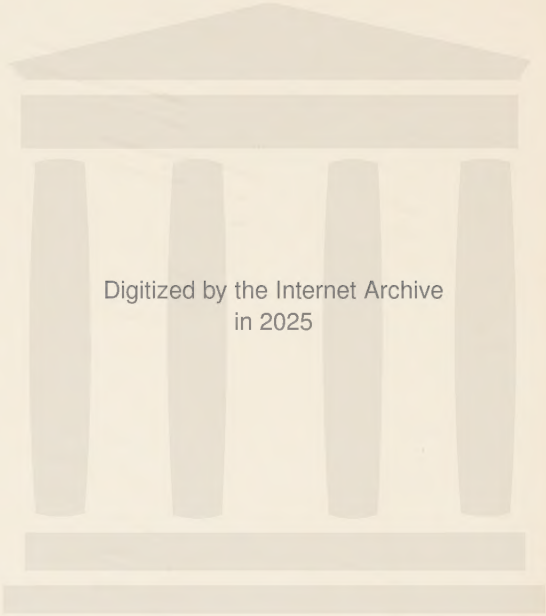
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SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

By

JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Basal Beliefs of Christianity.
The World a Spiritual System.
Can We Believe in Immortality?
The Coming of the Lord.
Is the World Growing Better?
The Personality of God.
A Wonderful Night.
A Wonderful Morning.
Scenes and Sayings in the Life of Christ.
A Summer across the Sea.
The Psychology of Religion.
The Truth about Christian Science.
The Truth about Mormonism.
The Meaning of Education.
The Attractions of the Ministry.
The City of Twelve Gates.
Jesus as Judged by His Enemies.
The Making and Meaning of the New Testament.
Immortality in the Light of Modern Thought.
Old Faith and New Knowledge.
Outfitting the Teacher of Religion.
What Do Present Day Christians Believe?
Sunday School Lessons, Ten Annual Volumes.

SNOWDEN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

EVANGELICAL AND UNSECTARIAN
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS, IMPROVED
UNIFORM SERIES: COURSE FOR

1931

BY
JAMES H. SNOWDEN

TENTH
ANNUAL VOLUME

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1930

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BY THE CORNWALL PRESS

The Bible as the Great Textbook of Religious Education

Our religion was not born this morning, but has ancient springs in the rocky ledges of Judea and further back in the sands of Babylon and Egypt. It grew slowly through many crude beginnings and preparatory stages before the Old Testament blossomed into the New and Jesus came as the Light of the World and the apostles were taught and then started out to teach the world. Its doctrines were gradually shaped and crystallized in molds of changing conditions and expanding experience and its ordinances were ever adapted and readapted to their day. Thus the Bible grew through more than a thousand years and accumulated the wisdom of the ages and fashioned the fundamentals of our faith. The whole book is a mass of inspired religious experience, infinite in its colorful variety and richness which custom can never stale nor age wither, and it is pervaded by the soundest principles and methods of religious education. We cannot intelligently understand the faith we follow and teach and live today unless we have some understanding of this history and book. As well might we dispense with all books in our schools and colleges and cut ourselves off from the accumulated knowledge and experience of the past and then think to understand and use our whole inherited civilization as to drop the Bible from our religious education or retire it to a subordinate place and then think we could have any proper appreciation of our religious faith and life. So we put the Bible first in our religious education as our textbook and we should keep it there. "The opening of thy words giveth light."

BOOKS TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW

A NEW COMMENTARY ON HOLY SCRIPTURE

EDITED BY CHARLES GORE

The Macmillan Company, $5.00

This new one-volume commentary is the work of Anglican scholars of eminent authority in the Biblical world, and contains many general articles on the Bible with detailed comments on important verses. It is a library or condensation of the results of the modern study of the Bible and will be of great value to Sunday School teachers who wish to keep in touch with such study.

THE MAKING AND MEANING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: ITS BACKGROUND, BOOKS AND BIOGRAPHIES

BY JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Macmillan Company, $1.50

This book tells how the New Testament was made and what it means. It sketches the Hebrew, Greek and Roman background out of which it grew, briefly explains each book in it, outlines the life of Jesus and of Paul, and brings it all home to our business and bosoms with illuminating interpretation and application. It shows us what a surprisingly modern book the New Testament is and makes good for it the claim and distinction that it is the most interesting as it is incomparably the most valuable book in the world.

OUTFITTING THE TEACHER OF RELIGION

BY JAMES H. SNOWDEN

The Macmillan Company, $2.00

The teacher of religion needs to be outfitted for his task as certainly as the miner and the sailor; for he is appointed to mine the rich treasures and sail the deeps of God's Word. This book undertakes to supply him with the necessary outfit by setting forth, in the First Part, the principles of religious education in nine chapters, and the Second Part in eight chapters treats of the principal methods of teaching, concluding with chapters on the Sunday School and on Week-Day Religious Education. Each chapter is supplied with a list of suggestive questions and topics. The book aims to be concrete and practical and suggestive.

WHAT DO PRESENT DAY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE?

By James H. Snowden

The Macmillan Company

This volume contains one hundred questions and their answers covering the main facts and doctrines of our Christian faith and life. They are not all equally or vitally important, but they are such questions as are now up for discussion and evaluation because they are giving trouble to many sincere believers. The brief chapters are not intended for professional scholars but are for general readers and especially for young people who are only interested in plain answers. Since it is hoped that the volume may be used as a textbook for study classes in Christian doctrine and life and with this end in view, a list of questions and topics for further discussion is appended to each chapter.

PREFACE

These lesson expositions follow the subjects suggested by the International Lesson Committee for adults and young people and the intermediate and senior grades. The treatment can be adapted by the teacher to all grades down through the junior and primary. The Bible text used in this volume is that adopted by the International Lesson Committee, the American Standard Edition, which as a more accurate translation serves in itself as a textual commentary in many points. The use of this copyright text has been specially granted for this volume by Thomas Nelson and Sons, its authorized publishers.

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SNOWDEN'S
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST QUARTER

We begin the year with a series of studies in the Gospel of Luke extending through six months and covering the life of Jesus as portrayed by this evangelist. Luke was of non-Jewish descent and formed the solitary instance in which the mantle of inspiration was carried outside of the chosen people and thrown around one of Gentile birth.

He was the traveling companion and biographer of Paul and wrote under his influence so that in some degree his gospel has behind it the authority of the great apostle.

Luke was with Paul part of the time during his missionary journeys and during his detention of two years in Capernaum before he was taken to Rome and went with him on this memorable voyage and remained with him during his imprisonment in that city, so that he had ample opportunity to meet and mingle with the disciples of Jesus who were "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" and gather materials for his gospel as is set forth in his preface.

Luke was a member of the medical profession and many allusions and tender touches in his gospel indicate the close observation and the humaneness of a physician, such as "a great fever" and "full of leprosy."

Thus the healing ministry and human charm of Jesus shine out in special splendor in his pages.

His scholarly training and habits also fitted him for investigating and writing the life of Jesus and this notably appears in the preface to his gospel which is a document of first-rate importance in assuring us of the historicity of his narrative. Renan declared the Gospel of Luke "the most beautiful book ever written."

It is under the direction and inspiration of such a guide that we set out in this series of lessons.

THE IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES COURSE

for 1931

FIRST QUARTER

JESUS THE WORLD'S SAVIOUR

STUDIES IN LUKE

(First Half of a Six-months' Course)

Aim: A study of the life, teachings, and saving ministry of Jesus as recorded in the gospel of Luke, in order to inspire and guide the pupil to accept him, as Saviour and Lord; to enter into increasing fellowship with him, to bear effective witness to his saving and transforming power; to follow his example and manifest his spirit in life and service.

LESSON I—JANUARY 4

The Birth of John the Baptist

Lesson: Luke 1.

Golden Text: Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways. Luke 1:76.

Devotional Reading: Luke 1:68–79.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Preparing the Way for Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Character and Mission of John.

Lesson Text: Luke 1:8–17, 80

8 Now it came to pass, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw *him*, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient *to walk* in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared *for him*.

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Pious Ancestry.

2. An Angel Visitant.

3. A Joyous Announcement.

4. True Greatness.

5. A Worthy Work.

6. The Child Grew.

Our lesson introduces us to a humble home of pious people in Jerusalem, Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth. He was a priest faithfully fulfilling his office in the temple day by day. It was an obscure home unknown in the fashionable circles of Herod's court. Yet all these conspicuous people of wealth and social and political standing have utterly vanished into oblivion and millions today are studying the lives of this humble priest and his wife.

Many are the parsonages in our country hidden away in quiet places out of which have come influences that have blessed the world.

The roll call of our leaders in every field, presidents and literary men and educators and ministers, would show that a surprising proportion of them come from such homes. Nearly all the characters in the Bible had

such an origin and Jesus himself is the supreme instance of it. The gospel in its whole history has been closely associated with such homes and it is the most potent influence in the world today in shaping the Christian home.

1. Pious Ancestry

Luke starts his narrative in the days of Herod, the king of Judea.

Herod the Great was a monster of iniquity, and his reign marked the very darkest hour of the later history of the Jews.

Yet in these terrible days the fulness of time arrived and Christ was born, as out of the foulness of stagnant waters comes the snowy purity of the pond lily and shines as a white star on the bosom of the black waste.

When things are at their worst healing forces may develop that will overcome evil with good, and the purest saints may grow amidst the worst wickedness.

Luke begins the life of Jesus with John, his forerunner, and he begins the life of John with his parents, Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Every life has deep roots, and heredity is a tremendous factor in human character.

To account for a man we must know his parentage and ancestry. When we see John's parents we are not surprised at John himself.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

It would be hard to condense character into a more perfect crystal and to pronounce a finer eulogy.

They were both compacted of righteousness, which is the foundation and substance and highest attainment of character, and their righteousness was not simply human morality and respectability, but it grew out of a divine core and stood the test of God's judgment. They kept the commandments or the moral law, and observed the ordinances or ceremonial law; they had both the inner spirit and the outer form of righteousness.

Yet there was a great void in these blameless lives, for no child had come to bless them with its innocence and beauty and joy, and to give them a share in the Messianic hope.

The fullest and most perfect life is incomplete at some point and has its disappointed hopes, and we shall never be satisfied until we "awake with thy likeness."

2. An Angel Visitant

Disappointment, however, did not sour and embitter the aged Zacharias, but he kept right on faithfully at his work as a priest in the temple service, and this kept his heart young and his life sweet.

And it was in and through this service that a great and unexpected blessing came.

The priests were divided into twenty-four courses (1 Chronicles 23), and each course served in turn a week at a time. Every morning the various parts in the temple service were distributed among the priests by lot.

On this day the lot fell to Zacharias to enter the Holy Place and offer the burnt incense, which was the most sacred distinction that could fall to a priest and could come to him only once in his lifetime. At the tinkling of a bell that announced the hour of sacrifice, Zacharias, robed in white and with covered head and feet, stepped into the Holy Place and stood in the dim light of the seven-branched candlestick before the veil of Babylonian tapestry, woven of blue and scarlet and purple into a fabric of matchless beauty, that shut in the Holy of Holies where God dwelt "in the thick darkness." Live coals were placed on the altar, the assistant priest retired, and then Zacharias poured incense on the flames and the fragrant smoke rose in clouds as a symbol of the prayers of Israel. While standing in the solemn silence, rapt in holy exaltation, an angel or messenger of the Lord, appeared on the right side of the altar.

This was the first of the angel visitants that flitted and hovered around the birth of our Lord.

Four hundred years had passed since prophetic or angelic messages had come to the chosen people, but now the long silence was broken and frequent messengers sped to and fro between heaven and earth as birds break the silence of the winter with the songs of spring.

It was a unique time and it was fitting that it should be attended with unique manifestations of heaven's visitation to earth.

The aged priest was frightened at the vision, as all men are at the spiritual and spectral. Sin has made us such foreigners to the unseen world that we are afraid of its approach and touch.

Yet the angel that caused the fear also brought the message that casts out all fear.

3. A Joyous Announcement

The angel spoke and the first word of the gospel history fell upon human ears.

"Fear not" was the first word to Zacharias, as it was to the shepherds at the birth of Jesus.

"Be not afraid" said Christ to the disciples in the storm. Christ comes to do us no harm, his gospel is glad tidings to cast fear out of our hearts and bring us peace.

Reasons were given to Zacharias why he should not fear.

His prayer had been heard. Long and earnestly had the pious priest prayed for a blessing until all hope of an answer was gone. Perhaps he had moments when he doubted the efficacy of all prayer. Yet his prayers were heard in heaven and had been stored up until they had accumulated such volume and pressure upon the divine will as drew forth a blessing.

God was only waiting his own time.

"Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." How the old man's heart must have leaped at the announcement! A passionate hope long dead suddenly sprang into life and overpowered him with joy.

No news was sweeter to Hebrew ears than the message, "Unto us a son is given." This brought the fulfilment of their most earnest desire and possibly put them in the Messianic lineage.

Yet a son is not always a joy and sometimes turns the sweetest hope into the sharpest agony. Zacharias was secured against this dark possibility by the assurance that he should have joy and gladness in his son and that many would rejoice in his birth.

All parents have this hope at the birth of a child, and happy are they that are not disappointed.

4. True Greatness

The angel next proceeded to sketch the character of the coming son. He should be "great."

Greatness is a universal human aim and effort.

Any father's heart would swell with pride at the knowledge that his son should attain greatness, perhaps without stopping to inquire as to the moral character of the distinction. Yet if we put a period after the word "great" in the angel's promise we have reached no sure ground for rejoicing.

Greatness may be built on rottenness and may be a menace and curse to the world, and at last all such greatness shall go up as dust; the higher it rises the deepef shall be its fall.

Some things that men count great are very small when measured by true standards. We know nothing of the value of greatness until we have examined its foundation and tested its moral quality.

The angel had something better to say to Zacharias than that his son should be great: "great in the sight of the Lord" was the announcement. Now we may put a period to the promise, for its foundation is solid and its test of worth stands sure. The Lord knows what true greatness is, and the man upon whom he sets his seal is great indeed.

This greatness is not the privilege of a chosen or gifted few, but is open to all.

A human being may be poor and meagerly endowed with ability and be obscure and unknown, and yet attain greatness of soul that is the highest human worth.

The coming son should not touch wine or strong drink; he was to be a Nazirite (Numbers 6:1–21), a man set apart from the ordinary occupations and comforts of life and devoted exclusively to the service of God.

"And he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." This was the eternal foundation of his greatness; it went down to and rested upon the Rock of Ages. God was to be in him from the beginning.

The son that has such holy heredity and keeps his life in God may remain humble and obscure in the sight of men, but he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.

5. A Worthy Work

The angel now crowns the promise of the coming son with a prophecy of his work. The great man should do something worthy of his eminence, or his greatness sinks into nothingness. "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God."

The great man takes up a great work that gears itself into the plan of God and lays hold on eternity.

He turns no man towards evil, but many towards righteousness and God.

"And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah." Before whose face? The antecedent of "his" can only be "the Lord their God," so early is the purple of divinity thrown around the Christ.

He shall "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," knitting together severed families and restoring domestic peace and joy; and he shall turn the feet of those that have slipped from the path of obedience into the wisdom of the just. Thus he shall "make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him." John the Baptist must go before Jesus and preach the stern message of repentance and open the door of penitence through which Christ can enter the heart.

Every epochal personage coming into the world must have a long preparation for his entrance.

There would be no use in bringing Sir Isaac Newton into the world sixteen centuries before Christ: he must wait until sixteen centuries after Christ before the world will be prepared to understand and receive his teaching.

Jesus Christ was subject to the same principle and had to wait the fulness of time.

John the Baptist was only the last of the great prophets that went before and prepared the way for him, and still we must go before him to make ready for his larger and fuller advent.

The work of John the Baptist is not ended but is being extended through all the Christian centuries and we must still carry it on.

We stand in this line, the torch heralding the coming of the Light of the World is now committed to our hands and we must pass it to those around us and carry it into the far and dark places of the earth.

Thus John's greatness was sketched out in prophecy before ever he was born; and he fulfilled the promise so that Jesus declared that among them that were born of women, there was none greater than he.

Yet this John, standing so lofty among men, was only a herald whose footprints would quickly be obliterated in the dust by the chariot wheels of One coming after him, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

6. The Child Grew

This greatness of John, however, was not attained at a single bound but "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel." He was not born great or full-grown, but passed through the slow stages of growth and education and effort.

He sought no short-cut and quick process of getting ready for his work but took time and sank his roots deep in the solitude of the desert before he came forth strong to do the work appointed unto him.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Which is most important in our make-up, heredity or environment, nature or nurture?
2. In what degree are we fatefully restricted by our birth?
3. Are there still angel visitants in the world?
4. Name some kinds of false and of true greatness?
5. Should we seek to be great (Jeremiah 45:5)?
6. How can we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord?

LESSON II—JANUARY 11

The Childhood of Jesus

Lesson: Luke 2.

Golden Text: Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:52.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 11:1–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Boy Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Religious Training of Jesus.

Lesson Text: Luke 2:40–52

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast;

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not;

44 But supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance:

45 And when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.

46 And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions:

47 And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

1. ***A Genuine Human Child.***
2. ***Slow Growth in Seclusion.***
3. ***At the Feast in Jerusalem.***
4. ***Astonished Parents.***
5. ***Obedience in the Home.***

How little we know about the childhood of the greatest Man that ever lived in this world! Two or three descriptive verses and one anecdote tell us all we know.

We would like to know more; for we are interested in the childhood of great men.

We are curious to see whether the stamp of greatness was on them from the beginning, or whether at first they were indistinguishable from other children. Sometimes genius buds in childhood, as in Mozart and Macaulay, but in other cases it sleeps and is unsuspected for many years. It lies like an explosive in the brain until some match or spark of circumstance touches it off, or like a seed which must wait for its coming summer.

Precocity is not always a favorable sign and is often followed by arrested development.

We wonder what may have been the boyhood of Jesus and long for a peep behind the veil.

As usual the apocryphal gospels are most voluble where the inspired gospels are most reticent. They fill the childhood of Jesus with marvels and miracles that are irrational and silly.

The broad difference between the books that were put into the Bible and the books that were kept out is one of the wonders and proofs of inspiration.

The gospels hide the childhood of Jesus from our view, giving us only these few verses as a hint of what lies behind the scene.

Jesus grew in secret and did not come forth before the world until he was ready for his work.

1. A Genuine Human Child

But while the gospels maintain an impressive silence, yet we know more than they tell us and have considerable general knowledge of the childhood of Jesus.

We know that he was a genuine human child and grew up through the normal stages and experiences of human life.

He nestled and cooed and smiled in his mother's arms. His "baby hand was pressed against the circle of the breast," and he was lulled to

sleep with a cradle song. He took his first tottering steps and invented his first childish words. He played in his father's carpenter shop and went to the village school, and we know the very books he studied, being the books of the Old Testament. There were brothers in the home and he grew up with them. He associated with the boys of Nazareth and was full of play.

We draw the line at any wrong act or thought. He was human and yet he was sinless.

But he was not a grown-up boy, such as we used to find in the Sunday school books, old beyond his years, morbidly self-conscious and pious; but a genuine boy, artless, inquiring, spirited, with his entire nature in free and healthy play.

The whole charm of his boyhood lies in the fact that he was a boy and not something else.

2. Slow Growth in Seclusion

The child grew. Growth is the law of all greatness. The mountains are pushed up an inch at a time, and the tree patiently adds cell to cell. Human life begins in unconscious infancy and must slowly increase in body and mind up to manhood.

Jesus obeyed this law.

He did not come as a preternatural boy, but as an unconscious infant, and then he grew.

He was subject to all the laws of growth, physical and mental. In the home and in the carpenter shop, in the school and synagogue, he grew day by day, lesson by lesson, and so increased in stature and wisdom. He was not crowded forward too fast and overtaxed in his work and growth, but he grew slowly and solidly. He took things as they came in their proper order and was not in a hurry.

Thirty years he grew in seclusion before he came forth strong to do his work. He got ready before he began.

Children are often hurried forward too fast and pushed into publicity too soon. Parents are ambitious to have their children shown signs of brightness and surpass other children, and they crowd them forward and often then irreparably injure them and sometimes they kill them. It is

pitiful to see children, through hot-house education or through dress and fashion, despoiled of their youth and made old beyond their years. Let them grow quietly and take things as they come; they will be young men and women soon enough.

Do not thrust them into the excitement and glare of the world, but keep them in seclusion and let them quietly increase in stature and wax strong in spirit, as Jesus did.

3. At the Feast in Jerusalem

The single recorded incident in the boyhood of Jesus is "a solitary floweret of the wonderful enclosed garden of thirty years." It occurred when he was twelve years of age.

This was a critical age and turning-point in the life of a Jewish boy.

At this age he was required to learn a trade for his own support; he began to wear the phylacteries, and he became "a son of the law" and was in some degree released from parental control.

He was now thrown upon his own responsibility and began to take care of himself, and this fact throws light upon this incident.

Every year the parents of Jesus went to the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, the great religious festival and national holiday of the Jews. Jesus had now reached the age when he was under obligation to go with them. Probably for the first time he stepped out of the seclusion of Nazareth into the publicity of the metropolis.

It must have been with emotions of deep wonder and reverence and joy that he entered the holy city and witnessed its scenes and shared in the services of the temple.

He had a boy's delight in the sights of the city, but the center of interest with him was his Father's house.

While at the feast the boy became separated from his parents, and they started home without him, supposing that he was in the caravan with friends, a not unlikely or unusual occurrence. As he did not appear at the end of the first day's journey, however, they became solicitous and then alarmed and started back to Jerusalem to find him. On the third day they found him in the temple in the midst of the rabbis, hear-

ing them and asking them questions and displaying such wisdom that all were amazed.

It is a critical hour with a youth when he enters a great city and is left there to himself.

Its attractions open before his feet many an alluring path to ruin. Jesus was susceptible to these temptations, but his religious instinct and training drew him to his Father's house.

He did not leave his religion behind in the village home when he went to the city.

The youth that is true to God in the city is safe.

This scene in the boyhood of Jesus has sometimes been despoiled of its truth and beauty by making it out that he was instructing these rabbis and showing off his superior wisdom.

On the contrary he was hearing them and asking them questions: he was not teacher but scholar.

Jesus never played the part of a smart boy, but was modest and teachable and kept his place in the presence of his superiors; and it was his rare spirit of wisdom and candor that excited the admiration of them that heard him on this occasion.

A teachable spirit is a beautiful thing in a child, and it is just as beautiful in mature years. It is one of the primary elements of Christian character and of all human greatness.

4. Astonished Parents

The parents were astonished—struck with admiration, as the strong Greek word means—at the scene.

Parents are proverbially pleased with and proud of signs of promise in their children, and Mary and Joseph experienced this delight in a rare degree as the religious genius of Jesus began to flash out.

Yet there was also an ominous element in the situation which drew from the anxious mother the chiding question, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." She realized that the lines of parental influence were slipping from her

hands, and that henceforth she could control her boy less and less and that he would act for himself more and more.

That was a painful moment for Mary, and it is a painful moment for every father and mother when they see their children beginning to separate themselves and assert their own individuality and responsibility.

But this is necessary and best for children. Ripened seeds must drop off the tree, or there would be no more trees.

Mary's question elicited from Jesus his first recorded utterance: "How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

This reply is the kernel of this anecdote, the vital germ that kept it alive and caused it to blossom out in the gospel.

It expresses surprise in the mind of Jesus that his parents did not know that the attractions of the temple had kept him and that there was his proper place and chief business.

We are here brought to the edge of the question, How early did Jesus become conscious of his divinity and his mission as the Messiah?

Into this mystery we cannot penetrate, but at twelve years of age he had clearly grasped the deepest purpose of his life.

Already his life was set to the music of his Father's will.

Life with him was not idleness, or wealth, or pleasure, but service in the Father's house.

Many people waste a good portion of life in finding out what they are here for, and some die without ever knowing why they were born.

Young people should discover as early as they can what their mission in life is and should find it in their Father's great house of the world.

The parents of Jesus understood not his first recorded utterance—a sad commentary and mournful prophecy. How often has he been misunderstood and misrepresented so that his light has been turned into darkness!

And still the world but little understands him, and very imperfectly do the most Christian minds penetrate into the depth and power of his meaning.

His simple words are larger than our largest thoughts of life and love.

5. Obedience in the Home

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them": a wonderful record is this of the Son of God!

This relation of course had in it no element of severity and bondage.

There were no unreasonable harsh restraints on the one side, and no waywardness on the other. Obedience was the disposition and habit and joy of Jesus. He kept the fifth commandment and so increased in favor with God and man.

This was the beginning of that path of obedience that led him all the way through temptation past the cross up to the throne.

Had he begun by disobeying his earthly father, he would have ended by disobeying his heavenly Father.

Obedience is the foundation stone on which life is built, and it is laid in the home in obeying parents.

True obedience is not bondage, but noble liberty. The steel track does not infringe on the liberty of the locomotive, but gives it all the liberty it has. Right commandments are steel tracks along which we can drive ourselves with utmost speed and perfect safety and thus enjoy the fullest liberty.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

There is some evidence that this bond of parental control and filial obedience is being unloosed and disregarded in our American homes, and in so far as this is true it is an ominous condition. As the children are in the home so they will be when they go out of the home, and the home must ever be the center and source of sound social and moral life. In many instances, also, the home is passing into the apartment, and this is not as favorable a place for the rearing of children as the separate house.

Let us strive to maintain the Christian home and train up our children in the way they should go that when they go out from us they may not depart from it.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the village of Nazareth.
2. Give an account of child life among the Jews in the days of Jesus.
3. What dangers beset our youth when they go to the city?
4. How shall young people find their mission in life?
5. Are our children becoming increasingly self-willed and wayward?
6. Can you trace any of the childhood of Jesus in his preaching?

LESSON III—JANUARY 18

The Ministry of John the Baptist

Lesson: Luke 3.

Golden Text: Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. Luke 3:8.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 40:3–11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Courageous Reformer.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Message of John the Baptist.

Lesson Text: Luke 3:7–17

7 He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?

11 And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.

12 And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do?

13 And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse *any one* wrongfully; and be content with your wages.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and *in* fire:

17 Whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Man with a Message.

2. The Message of Repentance.

3. A Fearless Preacher.

4. A Sermon that Brought Conviction.

5. A Powerful Temptation.

A great revival meeting was going on down in the Jordan valley. The preacher was John the Baptist. Nothing had been heard of him for thirty years during which he was growing up in the hill country of Judea in that seclusion and silence in which all great things grow.

John was a Nazirite, we might call him a monk, a man who had withdrawn from human society and for years had lived a solitary life in the rocky regions around the Dead Sea. His clothing consisted of a loose mantle or sack of coarse haircloth bound around his loins with a leather strap, and he lived on locusts and wild honey.

His life was close to the earth on its material side, but on its spiritual side it was close to the sky: for he lived in meditation and prayer.

What was the meaning of this strange life?

It was a reaction and protest against the formal hypocritical religion of his church and time. Religion among the Jews had gone to seed. There was no sap in it, there were no green leaves and ripening fruit on it, only pods and husks. The ceremonial system of Moses, good and necessary in its day, had grown into hard formality and empty hypocrisy from which humble sincere souls turned away in loathing.

Jewish orthodoxy had thus become a huge heap of dry wood and straw: John the Baptist was the spark that set this tinder on fire; he was the Martin Luther of this reformation.

Disgusted with Pharisaic hypocrisy, he turned from the Jewish church into the wilderness: not that he might have less religion, but that he might have more; that out there in the solitude far from men he might get close to God, as Moses did in the mount.

1. A Man with a Message

At length, being filled with the Spirit, John suddenly emerged from obscurity and appeared down on the banks of the Jordan where he began to preach. His striking personality, rough haircloth garment with its leather strap, uncut hair, flowing beard, and deep-set burning eye suggested a prophet.

The news reached Jerusalem that there was a prophet at the Jordan, and the crowds went pouring down the steep rocky roads to hear him. The excitement spread through the land, and the people came from every quarter.

What was the secret of the preacher's power?

Not his manner of dress and appearance. Eccentricities never made a Martin Luther or a John Knox. Long hair does not make a long head.

John the Baptist was a sincere soul touched with the fire of God.

He had got rid of empty forms and conventional cant and was speaking out his genuine beliefs and deep fiery emotions. Instead of mumbling dead traditional dogmas, John spoke living truth from the heart to the heart.

He was a man with a message who brought religion back to reality and made it a living power.

Such preaching created a tremendous sensation and drew people in great crowds. They had been fed on empty husks long enough and wanted bread.

The dessication of our creed is ever one of the greatest dangers of religion. When the spirit evaporates out of it and leaves it dry and dead, it becomes so much chaff fit only to be burned up or blown away.

We need to keep the sap of life circulating through our creed and ever breathe the holy breath of God that our faith may keep full of fresh vitality and fruitfulness.

2. The Message of Repentance

The burning message of John was repentance as a preparation for the Messiah who was about to come.

All this false religion had to be got rid of to make room for the true religion.

The ground must be cleared of thorn roots and weeds that the good seed may be planted.

Repentance prepares the way for Christ in our hearts and lives.

Sinful moods and motives, passions and pursuits, are obstructive and antagonistic to the presence of Christ in our souls, and must be uprooted and cast out before his Spirit can come in. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Repentance is the reaction of the soul against sin.

The Greek word means " a change of mind," a mental act that reverses the mind and will towards sin. It is thus in its root not an emotion but a volition which we can exercise and for which we are responsible.

It is a perception of guilt that grows into pain and overpowers our love for sin and turns us against it.

As an outer sign of such inner repentance, John instituted and administered the rite of baptism.

The outer sign symbolizes and confirms this inner act and roots it deeper in the soul, and we should receive this seal of our faith.

John also quoted the prophet Isaiah to prove that his message had ancient authority and divine sanction. The truth he was preaching was not revolutionary but evolutionary; the new grew out of the old and was its blossoming and fruitage. Isaiah was the original: John was the echo; Isaiah declared the message of repentance; John interpreted and applied it.

Every sin of ours puts an obstruction before the wheels of Christ's chariot, and we should clear it away that his path may be straight and smooth.

3. A Fearless Preacher

This preacher was not afraid of his congregation, though it had powerful people and enemies in it.

A great multitude was massed before John, but he faced them without fear and struck straight and hard at their sins.

Among the multitudes, whom did John espy but Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3:7) from Jerusalem. It must have surprised the fervent preacher to see these hypocritical prelates and worldly sceptics coming to hear his fiery denunciations.

Will not the preacher, who has been so hotly denouncing sin, now smooth his words and grow polite and cool and colorless in his preaching before these powerful dignitaries of the church and the world?

No, John only made his arrows sharper and shot them straight at these doctors of divinity. " Ye offspring of vipers, who hath warned you

to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." That showed the magnificent courage of the preacher.

John was brave as a lion, and the presence of these big sinners from Jerusalem only roused his might and fire.

He called them by a name that scorched and branded their guilt, and he gave them the same message of repentance that he did to the rabble and scum of the city. As Carlyle thought that the worst man in England would probably be found, not down in the slums of London, but up in the House of Lords, so John thought that the worst sinners in Judea were these Pharisees and Sadducees from Jerusalem.

Official position in the church is no assurance of holiness and protection against fiery condemnation.

One may wear its sacred robes and stand in its pulpit, or at its communion table, and yet conceal vipers in his heart.

"And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father": that is just what they were saying.

They prided themselves on their birth and ancestry and thought they were made of finer clay and richer blood than others and were therefore safe in their superiority.

But John dealt this pride a crushing blow: "for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." He told them that their proud birth and blood counted for nothing with God and that God could make out of common rocks and dirt better people than they were.

Good birth is something to appreciate and guard, but when it is turned into selfish exclusiveness and trusted as a substitute for personal worth, it becomes foolish and wicked pride that shall be cast down into the dust.

This kind of pride is not wanting among us. Even Americans, boasting of their republican government, yet in some instances have a hankering after aristocratic if not noble lineage and will pay large sums to get "a coat of arms" or other supposed proof and insignia of such descent.

John further told his hearers that it was no use for them to trust such things, for the axe was now laid to the root of the tree and every false faith should be cast into the fire.

There is where belong and will ultimately go all our falsities, whether of ancestry or of religion.

4. A Sermon that Brought Conviction

This searching sermon brought conviction and alarm to many of the hearers and drew from them the exclamation, "What then must we do?"

They were right in thinking that they must do something to find out and walk in the way of life, and John with great skill and tact adapted the message to each class of his hearers.

To the people he said, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise." In the hard selfish strife of their day they were to bless other lives and enrich their own souls with the spirit of charity. Publicans, or tax gatherers, were told to practice no extortion, and soldiers to do no violence. Each one was bidden to repent of and renounce the sin that specially beset him.

The gospel does not simply deal in glittering generalities, but fits itself closely into each one's own life and heart, pierces every soul at the point of its own temptation and guilt, and bids every one of us to repent of and cease to do the evil thing that we have been doing.

This passage in John's message is a fine instance of the "social gospel," which is a prominent note in our modern preaching.

We are to adapt the message we preach and teach so that it will squarely hit and expose and bring to judgment the sins of our day in business and politics and fashion and in all the relations of life.

5. A Powerful Temptation

So great were the popularity and prestige of John that the people were wondering whether he were not the promised Christ or Messiah himself.

It was a splendid opportunity and critical hour for this preacher.

A wave of popularity was swiftly bearing him on its crest towards power. The people were ready to believe anything about him and do anything for him. All he needed to do was to announce himself as the

Messiah, and the nation might accept him with burning zeal and fanatical devotion, and there was no telling what grand results might be achieved.

A glittering crown seemed to be just within his grasp. Why not take it?

Very plausible arguments and reasons would play around the mind of the preacher to persuade him that this was the right thing for him to do. Would he not use such power only for the good of men and the glory of God? And who could tell but that he was indeed come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

The temptation to seize such offered opportunities and turn them to personal ends is one of the strongest that can strike the human mind. It came to Cæsar when he was willing to take the crown and to Napoleon when he clapped the crown on his own head in Notre Dame. It came to Paul and Barnabus when the Lystrans were about to worship them as Gods, and this was the supreme temptation offered to Jesus when he was solicited to bow the knee to Satan as the price for a short-cut to the kingdom.

Many a minister is also beset with this temptation when he sees his popularity rising and is inclined to use it to increase his own pride and aggrandizement.

When we look into our hearts and lives and see how quick we are to push ourselves into the first place and seize everything that comes our way, we may know something of the seductiveness and strength of this temptation. To let pass an opportunity of enriching ourselves at another's expense, to stand out of another's way, to efface self and become lost in the popularity of a rival—who of us is sufficient for this thing?

This was the temptation that beat against John as he grew in prestige and the people reasoned in their hearts whether he were not the Christ. But he gave no sign of the struggle as he told the truth about himself, confessing, "I am not the Christ," and declaring, "There cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

Out of this marvelous self-effacement of John shines the unmatched splendor of his humility and supreme devotion to Christ. Yet of this man Jesus himself declared that there was born of women none greater than he.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What forerunners does Jesus have today?
2. What are some messages the world specially needs now?
3. What are some temptations that beset the modern preacher and teacher?
4. How can we so preach and teach as to bring conviction?
5. What is the place of revival meetings in the church?

LESSON IV—JANUARY 25

Jesus Tempted

Lesson: Luke 3:21–4:30.

Golden Text: In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. Hebrews 2:18.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:31:39.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How to Overcome Temptation.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Conflicting Ideals.

Lesson Text: Luke 4:1–13

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness

2 During forty days, being tempted of the devil. And he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, he hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him, if thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.

4 And Jesus answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone.

5 And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 For it is written,
He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee:

11 And,
On their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.

13 And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Meaning of the Temptation.

2. Bread out of Stones.

3. The World for a Word.

4. Leaping into Popularity.

5. It is Written.

Immediately after his baptism Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted.

Baptism and temptation are here crowded close together.

Scarcely had the voice from heaven died away when a whisper was heard from hell. Out of the baptismal benediction of the Father Jesus stepped into a desperate struggle with the devil.

There are sudden and violent changes of weather in the spiritual world.

It was while coming down from the mount where for forty days he had held communion with God that Moses lost his temper and smashed the tables of the law to pieces. It was just after leaving the communion table that Peter denied his Lord and swore that he did not know him.

The purest deed may be bordered with temptation; our finest moods may be marred by an evil suggestion.

When God is especially near to bless us, Satan is near by watching for his chance.

Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted. His temptation was no accident or evil fate, but a divine appointment. Temptation has its place and use in the world.

There is nothing wrong in being tempted: the wrong begins only when we begin to consent to it.

Yet we are not to run into temptation of our own accord. We may not hunt the devil or go into his den ourselves. The path of duty as we are led of the Spirit will take us into temptation enough.

It was when Jesus was hungry and wasted with forty days' fasting and was reduced to the lowest point of physical exhaustion that this temptation struck him. Satan did not assault him at his strongest hour but at his frailest moment when his vitality was at its lowest ebb.

Satan knows a man's weakest time and waits for it. There are dangerous low tides in the strongest life. The best man has his hours when he would not dare meet the devil. These irresolute moments are often connected with bodily exhaustion and nervous depression.

We need to keep a constant grip on the strength of God that when we are weak we may be strong.

1. The Meaning of the Temptation

Before the conflict begins let us take a general view of it and consider its meaning. What was the situation and state of mind with Jesus at this time? He had just come up from his baptism which probably marked the moment when he became fully conscious of his Messiahship and divinity and supernatural power. He now knew that he was the Son of God at whose bidding stones would turn into bread and water into wine.

Seized and overwhelmed with this mighty consciousness, Jesus went into the wilderness to meditate upon and determine how he was to handle this tremendous endowment.

What would be the first, most natural and deadliest temptation in the possession of such power? To use it selfishly for personal ends. This is the temptation that always arises in connection with the sudden acquisition of power, as when a man gains great wealth or high office.

Sudden power of any kind puts a severe strain on character and is a dangerous possession.

The question pressing on the mind of Jesus may have been, How would he use his divine power? For personal comfort and aggrandizement, or only in the service of God for the salvation of the world?

It was a critical and perilous hour with him.

If he were to use his power one way, he would be lost; if he were to use it the other way, the world would be saved.

Satan saw this psychological moment and was there to try to push Jesus off the edge of the right use of his power into the bottomless pit.

This selfish use of power was the poisoned point of each of the three arrows that Satan shot at Jesus.

2. Bread out of Stones

"If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread." The very tip of this temptation is a doubt. This was the tip of the first arrow that Satan shot into the world.

Doubt is often the mother of disobedience.

Get us to doubt God and truth and duty, and it is a short and easy step into sin.

Jesus, having fasted forty days, craved food in every fiber of his body, and Satan kindled his appetite into a veritable consuming fire with the thought of fresh fragrant bread.

The proposal was that he should get bread, not by taking it from others, but by creating it himself. How innocent and reasonable and necessary and right this seemed!

But Jesus saw through its false innocence into its black heart.

For it was a temptation to use his power for his own gratification, and if he did this once he would do it again, and in thus saving his life would lose it.

Deeper still, this was practical distrust of God. Would not the Father provide and shall he in the very first extremity cut loose from God and take care of himself?

Therefore Jesus smote the evil suggestion with the trustful declaration "Man shall not live by bread alone": and that temptation lay dead.

But it is not dead for us. Appetite is still for Satan our most vulnerable point of attack.

He not only plays upon our natural and rightful appetites, but he has created new and false ones with which he destroys men.

And how artfully is the plea of necessity made? "I must make a living and therefore must continue in this evil business. I must compete with rivals and therefore cannot be too scrupulous about methods." The necessity for bread is thus supposed to make any wrong right and to wipe out the whole decalogue.

Anything to get a living and make money is the devil's creed. But it is not necessary that we should live at all.

There is only one supreme moral necessity: to trust God and keep his commandments.

3. The World for a Word

Showing him in a vision the whole world Satan next promised Jesus, "If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine." It was

an appeal to Christ's human ambition, holding up before him a glittering dazzling prize.

It was a temptation to resort to worldly means to get the unworldly kingdom. Why not win the world by one little act, even get the whole world by a word?

How frequent and strong is this temptation with us? Satan spreads out before us, not all the kingdom of the world, but only some little portion of it: as much as we can see from our door-step, or over our counter or office desk; we want it and many are willing to bend the knee to the devil to get it.

How strong is the temptation to take the short cut to our ambition?

The way of righteous getting, of slow growth, of patient toil and sacrifice, the way of the cross, is not to our liking. We want the kingdom at a stroke and are in danger of selling our souls to meet it.

Jesus felt the full force of this temptation.

He gazed upon the splendid picture and fascinating scene of that outspread world. He saw how short and quick was the step to the promised throne.

But he also realized how false was the promise and how sure was the ruin into which such disloyalty to his mission and to his Father would plunge him.

Then turning in resistless might, he tore the mask off his tempter, revealed him in his hideous nakedness as Satan, bade him from his presence and declared his eternal allegiance to the Lord his God.

4. Leaping into Popularity

Next Satan led Jesus in a vision to the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, " If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee."

This temptation is the opposite of the first one.

Defeated on one side, Satan slips around and attacks Jesus on the other side, searching for some weak or unguarded point where he can

get through Christ's armor. The first temptation was that Jesus should trust God too little: this one is that he should trust him too much; that he should be presumptuous in his trust and go beyond the divinely appointed path of obedience and safety. It was a suggestion that he could fly from the laws of life off at any angle of wild caprice, and that God would keep him in all such ways.

Even faith may become presumptuous and disobedient. We want God to keep us, not in all his ways, but in all our ways.

The faith cure, in so far as it refuses or neglects to use natural means, is virtually a proposal to jump from the pinnacle of the temple of natural law without getting hurt, to set natural laws at defiance and expect God to work a miraculous deliverance.

Many are they that have trusted this specious device and have paid the price of bodily injury if not of death.

This temptation also involved the use of Christ's power for a personal end. For its object seems to have been that he should gain the applause of the multitude and thereby get himself accepted as the Messiah; it was another short cut by which he was to leap into popularity.

Is not this temptation still assailing us?

How strong is the disposition to gain quick popularity by doing some sensational thing that will at one stroke put the performer on the front page of the newspaper and make him or her the hero of the hour?

Even ministers are subject to the temptation to resort to sensational methods of preaching: anything to get a crowd appears to be the principle of some of them. They may succeed for a little while but not for a long while. Any mountebank can jam a church one Sunday by announcing that a trained bear will perform on the platform, but to get the same crowd the next Sunday he must announce that two bears and a greased pig will perform. If the bear or pig does not appear, he may fill the place himself. Such methods are meretricious and short-lived and are unworthy and may be shameful in a Christian pulpit.

Verily such methods and ministers have their reward.

Jesus saw through this proposal also, and smote it with the declaration, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God," and the last arrow from Satan's quiver lay harmless at his feet.

The Son of God was still untouched; not one fleck had spotted the immaculate whiteness of his soul. And the devil, foiled, defeated and crushed, fled and vanished into the infinite darkness whence he came.

5. It is Written

Mark the means by which Jesus resisted these temptations: "It is written." "It is written." "It is written." The Word of God was his shield and by it he quenched every flaming dart. Yet it was not by the mere quoting of Scripture that Jesus defended himself, for the devil quoted Scripture too.

It was by his grip on the realities back of the words that he conquered.

The sense of God's Fatherhood, trust in him, steady sober obedience to him, unswerving loyalty to him, were his support.

He conquered by the ordinary means of grace.

He did not call into action his divinity, but he bore this temptation in his humanity. He was tempted as we are and he conquered as we may.

We need no new weapons to resist Satan, for still "it is written."

The old Bible furnishes shields and swords to match all the temptations of our modern world.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you, and when he is gone the angels of God will come.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is temptation?
2. Could we have a moral world without it?
3. Show that other Bible characters were tempted.
4. Have temptations diminished or increased in our modern world?
5. What are some special temptations of youth?
6. Can we study our temptations and prepare to meet them?

LESSON V—FEBRUARY 1

Jesus the Great Physician

Lesson: Luke 4:31–5:39.

Golden Text: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Isaiah 53:4.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:1–6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Our Friend and Helper.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christian Ministry to Physical Ills.

Lesson Text: Luke 4:38–44; 5:12–16

38 And he rose up from the synagogue, and entered into the house of Simon. And Simon's wife's mother was holden with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them.

40 And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And demons also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

42 And when it was day, he came out and went into a desert place: and the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him, that he should not go from them.

43 But he said unto them, I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent.

44 And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

12 And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, behold, a man full of leprosy: and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

13 And he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go thy way, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went abroad the report concerning him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities.

16 But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***From the Church into the Home.***
2. ***A Sunset Scene.***
3. ***Retirement into Solitude.***
4. ***Other Cities Also.***
5. ***A Leper Healed.***

We are here given a picture of a busy Sabbath in the life of Jesus. He began the day by going to church in the synagogue. The service in the synagogue was social worship in which the people were free to take part. Jesus was not a mere passive listener in this service, but he expounded the Scriptures and proclaimed the gospel.

He not only received something from the service, but he also gave something to it.

Some people seem to think that worshiping is doing nothing, and in their case that may be just what it is. But genuine worshiping is working, being alive and alert in every faculty of the soul and receiving and giving spiritual influences.

Every one should have part in the service and speak or pray or sing.

Jesus further ministered in the synagogue by healing a demonized man who screamed out in the service and Jesus spoke the word that quieted and healed him. The church must make war on wickedness and heal human ills.

A church that does not stir up evil spirits, much less cast them out, has lost its divine commission and is an impertinence among men. Thus Jesus spent this Sabbath morning in the church.

1. From the Church into the Home

What did Jesus do when he left the church? "And he rose up from the synagogue, and entered into the house of Simon." What did Jesus do in this home?

Just the same kind of work he did in the synagogue: he healed Simon's wife's mother of a fever; he blessed that home.

We do not see much of the home life of Jesus; in truth he had no home nor where to lay his head. But when we do find him in a home we always see it made better by his presence: a sin is forgiven, a dying child is healed, or a dead brother is raised to life.

Christ's religion was not something he left in the synagogue, but it was his holy healing presence and power that went with him wherever he went, radiating its beneficent virtue.

There is a close connection between the church and the home.

However many miles may lie between them, they touch each other in their inner spirit. What we are in the one, we are in the other.

Worship cannot be shut up in the church, but it must go with us and renew itself in work.

Worship and work are only two sides or aspects of the same spirit.

Religion is preached in the church, but it must be practiced everywhere, especially in the home. The close of worship should be the beginning of work. "Is it all done?" asked a man coming up to the door of a church at the close of a service. "No," was the answer, "it is all said, and now is the time to do it."

If we get any good in the church, it ought to show itself speedily in the home. Some sick one should be ministered to with a kinder hand, more patience and gentleness should mark our behavior, beautiful courtesies should be more abundant, new Christlike graces should bloom out in our lives.

The home should be brighter and sweeter on Monday morning and through all the week because we have worshiped on the Sabbath in the church.

2. A Sunset Scene

This Sabbath day closed with a wonderful scene. The city gathered at the door of Simon's house, and the sick were brought until they filled the street, and Jesus healed them and cast out evil spirits.

His mercy, that in the morning manifested itself in the synagogue and in the afternoon filled the home, in the evening overflowed into the street and spread through the city.

The stream of beneficence once started did not stay its flood until the whole city was bathed in its healing tide. The love of God is expansive and unlimited and has a wideness like the wideness of the sea. There is no danger of its stream ever running dry, and it will reach the greatest sinner and save the last lost child.

Our religion, having flowed out of the church into the home, must not be confined there, but must overflow into the street and send its cleansing tide through the whole city and country and world. Having worshiped God in the church, we should go everywhere touching men with healing hands.

Such was this eventful Sabbath in the life of Jesus, and it is a pattern in spirit for the way in which we should spend this day.

3. Retirement into Solitude

Jesus could not stand this incessant work and strenuous life without relief and rest, but he took his rest in a peculiar way. "And when it was day, he came out and went into a desert place" "and there prayed," as we read in Mark (1:35). He sought a change of scene by seeking solitude that he might engage in meditation and prayer. Without this renewal of his own inner life by immersing his soul in silence and communion, his spiritual energies would be exhausted and run dry.

He must fill his own soul that he might fill others.
Meditation is necessary to the mastery of life.

We must live our lives inwardly in thought before we can live them outwardly in action. The architect thinks his building through from foundation to finish, he puts it all up in his brain before he erects it in steel and stone; and such inner preparation must always precede outer execution.

The outer action may appear brief and sudden, but the inner preparation has been long and patient.

The harvest may be gathered in an hour, but through how many weeks and months did the wheat silently drink in the showers and the sunshine before it ripened into golden grain. The meteor burns itself out in the twinkling of an eye, but through how many millions of miles did it gather momentum for that brief flash of splendor. A great surgeon said that if he had only three minutes for a critical operation he would take two to get ready.

Jesus took thirty years of preparation for three years of work.

If we would be architects and artists in living we must take time and get ready, grow deep roots of wisdom and strength in meditation and prayer, and then we may throw our branches out and bear ripened fruit in the world.

In our hurried life we are losing this fine art and deep means of enrichment.

Some people are always craving a crowd and itching for a new thrill. Left alone they are instantly discontented and miserable. Other minds are so amply stored with mental and spiritual treasures that they are their own kingdom and may be richer than Crœsus in inner wealth.

Often we need to retire into solitude and put a finger on our spiritual pulse and look ourselves in the face and see what manner of persons we are.

By soaking our souls in meditation and prayer and communion with the great minds of literature and especially with the Bible, we shall gather strength to do the work and bear the burdens and fight the battle of life.

In such solitude we feed on bread that the world knows not of.

4. Other Cities Also

Jesus "could not be hid" for long, and presently "the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him," but he had other work to do and "said unto them, I must read the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent."

This is the principle of home and foreign missions.

Why did Jesus not just settle down and stay in Capernaum? That lake port and fishing town was not all converted to his gospel and cleansed and healed. He had scarcely touched the fringe of its disease and wickedness and there was there for him a lifetime of work. Why move on to "other cities"?

This is precisely the argument of those who are opposed to home missions and especially to foreign missions.

We have Christian work enough to do in our own city: let us save it before we give our money to the saving of other cities; and besides, ought we not first to look after ourselves?

This argument becomes still more insistent when it comes to foreign missions, and frequently ridicule is poured upon the visionary scheme of sending missionaries and money to foreign lands when we have so much heathenism at home.

The same principle is made to do service in seeking first the safety and prosperity of our own country and holding aloof from the means of helping to bear the burdens and dangers of other countries.

What is the matter with this argument and spirit? Does it not look reasonable enough?

It may be made to look reasonable according to worldly standards, but it is selfish and is thereby opposed to the very spirit of Christ and his gospel. We cannot completely evangelize our city before we go into the next cities because all cities have common interests and life, and the spiritual condition of one necessarily affects the condition of others. Business understands this point and knows that one city cannot permanently prosper with other cities in financial depression, and one country cannot grow rich on the poverty and ruin of other countries.

Even in financial matters we must all go up or down together in the long run. Much more is it so in spiritual matters.

If the people of one city resolved that they would completely evangelize their own city before they would help evangelize other cities, they would thereby doom themselves to remain spiritually crippled and withered: their very plan would be selfish and would thereby defeat itself. The last state of such a city would be worse than the first.

On the other hand, let a city begin to think about the welfare of "the other cities," and its own welfare will be promoted thereby; its unselfish spirit of helping other cities will help its own people and hasten their own evangelization.

So also foreign missions react helpfully on home missions.

The question is not so much whether the heathen can be saved without us, but whether we can be saved without helping to save the heathen. In the spiritual world it is more blessed to give than to receive, and this spirit will send us with the gospel into the other cities in our country and into other countries around the whole world.

So Jesus preached "the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities," and so must we go with the same gospel even unto the ends of the earth.

5. A Leper Healed

Jesus now went out on a preaching tour in the other cities, and we are given an instance of his healing power in this wider ministry. The case is that of one of the most dreadful of human maladies. Leprosy in its contagiousness, repulsiveness and incurability make it a terror of countries where it prevails.

It is an intensely realistic and frightful symbol of sin, showing outwardly in rotting limbs what sin does inwardly in rotting the soul.

This poor fellow was "full of leprosy," and he came to Jesus, of whom he had heard, and fell on his face in worship and said, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." Only one who is "Lord" endowed with divine power can penetrate to the seat and core of sin in us and cleanse its vileness and make the infected soul white and whole.

Jesus "stretched forth his hand, and touched him," itself an act from which any one else would have shrunk with horror.

We are often very particular about how we touch people.

A whole caste of degraded people in India are called "the untouchables," and we may maintain the same unchristian attitude and spirit towards people in our country.

Then came the quiet but mighty word of healing, "I will; be thou clean." "And straightway the leprosy departed from him." Some healing virtue passed from the divine person of Jesus into the leprous man and killed the disease in its source and cleansed his blood and made him whole.

That was a single word and act in far Judea, but Jesus at this very hour is uttering the same word to every repentant sinner and working the same cleansing power.

Jesus directed the man to go to the priest and get a legal certificate of his healing, and while Jesus tried to keep down excitement by charging him to tell no man, yet he could not keep the good news to himself but spread it abroad. Have we nothing to tell others about what Jesus has done for us? The world needs any good news on this subject it can hear.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we do healing work in the church?
2. How can we carry the gospel out of the church into the home and world?
3. Can we preach the gospel out on the street?
4. How can we apply the gospel to reforming the city?
5. Are all cities being woven into closer solidarity and mutual welfare?

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 8

Jesus the World's Teacher

Lesson: Luke 6.

Golden Text: As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Luke 6:31.

Devotional Reading: Proverbs 3:13–18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Living by the Golden Rule.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Accepting the Standards of Jesus.

Lesson Text: Luke 6:27–42

27 But I say unto you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, pray you for them that despitefully use you.

29 To him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also.

30 Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much.

35 But love your enemies, and do *them* good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil.

36 Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

39 And he spake also a parable unto them, Can the blind guide the blind? shall they not both fall into a pit?

40 The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher.

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Or how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me cast out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Loving Our Enemies.

2. The Golden Rule.

3. Mercy.
4. Judging Others.
5. Good Measure.
6. Motes and Beams.

After a night spent in prayer, Jesus with his disciples met a great multitude on one of the hills back of Capernaum, and from that lofty pulpit delivered the Sermon on the Mount that has gone resounding through the centuries and after nineteen hundred years has lost none of its sweetness and saving power.

It is truly a mountain sermon, overtopping all human teachings and breathing the air of heaven.

It sets forth the end and outcome of the kingdom of God in holiness of heart and life and may be said to contain the constitution and by-laws of this kingdom. The world has not yet caught up with its simplest requirement. Saturate society with its spirit and the world would be washed pure and the kingdom of God have come. One day filled with it would be a bit of heaven.

The present lesson contains some of its characteristic teachings.

1. Loving Our Enemies

The duty of loving our enemies is urged upon us. At this point the new law of the kingdom is set in contrast with the old law of Moses. The Mosaic law required love to one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18), and even went so far as to suggest hatred to one's enemy (Deut. 23:6).

Jesus broadened the command so as to make it include enemies and enjoined his disciples to pray even for active and bitter enemies that persecuted them.

This is a hard grace to exercise, calling for a full and ripe Christian spirit, and there is pressing need for it in these days when the world has been so recently filled with "songs of hate" and is still in a state of unsettled problems and mutual recriminations.

The great example in this, as in everything else, is God himself.

If he requited his enemies as their rebellion deserves he might slay men by the million by the breath of his wrath. But he is long suffering and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

In some ways he puts no distinction between the good and the evil. His sun rises and flings its splendor with equal prodigality upon the righteous and the wicked, and his rain distils its blessing on the just in no ampler or richer grace than upon the unjust.

This impartial and generous goodness should fill our hearts and mark our behavior.

If we simply love people of our own kin and kith, those that love us and are congenial to us, we are no better than people of the world, and even barbarians and pagans love their own kin. The Christian should have some of the expansive love of God that takes in all people as his children and yearns to draw them to his heart.

Can we love enemies with the affection of the heart that we bestow upon our friends?

No, not with this warmth of affection, but with the spirit of good will that seeks to do the best thing for them and to remove offenses and restore mutual faith and fellowship. We can learn to do this by looking on every one as a child of God and a brother; then we can find some good in that one and some need we can supply, some service we can render; and by rendering this service, even unto sacrifice, and cherishing good will, we can acquire and intensify the spirit of love that will go out towards everybody and make the whole world our kindred.

This love to enemies is expressed by Jesus in parabolic or paradoxical speech to arrest our attention, but its meaning and application are plain to the discerning mind.

2. The Golden Rule

This spirit is condensed and crystallized into the Golden Rule that fell from the lips of Jesus as one of the most precious jewels of the world's literature. "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

Something similar to this has been found in other writings, as in Confucius who stated it in its negative form, "Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself."

But however men may have been struggling towards this truth Jesus gave it its full and generous expression and thereby stamped it with his spirit and originality.

This lifts it out of the narrow calculating spirit of regarding only our legal relations with others and sets it free in the golden atmosphere of Christian liberty and love.

The rule as thus expanded and glorified requires us to consider every one in the light of brotherhood in which we are to extend to him every good that we could rightly wish him to bestow upon us.

If he is in any need that we can supply, growing out of ignorance or poverty or misfortune or sin or sorrow, we should deal with him as did the Good Samaritan with the wounded Jew, going to his aid, showing him our sympathy and providing for him necessities as our means permit. If to one in trouble we can and are able to extend a sympathetic and helping hand, we should give him what we would be glad to receive in like circumstances from him; if we are involved with another in a business transaction in which he falls into our power and we might press him hard and drive him to ruin, we are to consider what we would think just and right if our relations were reversed. If we are tempted to pass severe and sinister judgment upon another, we should temper our speech with the same restraint and kindness we would wish exercised towards us.

The same rule should be extended to corporations and churches and political opponents and parties and even to nations. Should one nation take advantage of another owing to its superior position and power to exact unjust and oppressive requital or reparations?

This rule, like all rules, calls for interpretation and adaptation to the peculiar conditions of each case.

It cannot be pleaded against the enforcement of justice in our individual and social and international relations. Generosity cannot be set up as a bar to justice, and yet even justice may be so administered that it hardens into injustice.

The spirit of this Golden Rule is just the spirit of universal good will and love, and if this spirit breathes through our social relations it will temper and soften and brighten and glorify them into mutual brotherhood and blessing.

3. Mercy

The spirit of mercy is enjoined upon us.

This is the Golden Rule carried to the extreme limit of its gracious application.

Mercy is forbearance from exacting justice and punishment from those who are in the wrong and have fallen into our power; it restrains us from pressing others to the wall when justice might sustain us in doing so; it forbids us to exercise a hard spirit towards others but calls for brotherly consideration and kindness.

Especially are we to cherish and exercise this spirit because we have all been spared and blessed by the mercy of God, and for us to receive of the grace of his mercy and then turn in unrelenting justice upon others is hardness of heart and despicable ingratitude.

Jesus set this forth in the parable of the Unjust Debtor (Matt. 18:21–35), who had been forgiven by his lord an immense sum amounting to fifteen millions of dollars, and then went out and forthwith seized by the throat a debtor who owed him about a millionth part of this sum and brutally choked him to the point of death, demanding instant payment. This extreme case excites our indignation and abhorrence, but it is only a vivid illustration of what we really do when we are recipients of God's merciful treatment when he might have justly cut us off in our sins, and then turn upon a fellow man, who cannot owe us a millionth part of what we owe to God, and exact of him our pound of flesh or other harsh requirement.

Justice that knows no temper of mercy may be unjust and cruel as death, and there is no small amount of such injustice in our social and business life.

Are not Christians and members of the same church often harsh in their mutual relations and even good haters?

A perfect standard is held up to us at this point when we are admonished to be merciful "even as your Father is merciful." Were God to require of us one of a thousand, who could stand before him?

Having freely received divine mercy we should exercise the same spirit towards our human kind.

4. Judging Others

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." This cannot be taken so literally as to make it exclude all judgment of one another, for such judgment is a social and moral necessity and it is one of the safeguards of our life.

It puts a wholesome restraint upon people to be just and careful in their judgments, and such judgment acts as a social scavenger to keep our moral life clean.

But the spirit and purpose of the rule is plain: it warns us against unnecessary and unjust and censorious fault-finding; against a gossiping tongue and a bitter spirit; against raising rumors and suspicions and sowing the air with sinister insinuations and suggestions. It is easy to cast an aspersion or a shadow of doubt upon a person by a mere word or gesture or glance of the eye or shrug of the shoulder that will start talk and grow into reports and become neighborhood gossip and scandal and cause alienation and blight characters and do incalculable harm. Such judgment is malicious and wicked and should receive the strongest condemnation.

One who is given to such fault-finding is sure to have it come back upon him, and with what judgment he judges he shall be judged.

A gossiping sharp tongue, a chronic censorious spirit will get what it gives, reap what it sows, and be condemned with the same judgment with which it condemns others.

If we would have others fair-minded and charitable in their judgments of us, we must exercise the same spirit towards them.

5. Good Measure

The rule of giving and receiving forgiveness leads to the statement of a general social law that applies to all giving.

As we give, we shall receive, and the more generously we measure out our benefits to others, the more abundantly shall such blessings come back to us.

One who is gracious and courteous in his treatment of others will receive such treatment in liberal measure himself; whereas one who is censorious and selfish in his social relations will be paid back in his own coin.

The people that complain of the lack of sociability in a church are pretty sure to be conspicuous themselves in their lack of such grace; they are cold and distant in their manner and they get what they give;

whereas people who are genial and warm and sunshiny themselves never complain of any lack of sociability in others because they draw it out of them.

The icicle carries its own chill, and the sunbeam its own warmth.

Even in business generous dealing attracts trade and increases its own prosperity. Merchants that skimp their measures and give as little as possible lose out in the long run compared with those who are liberal and give as much as they can.

Our own yardstick and bushel measure will be used in our dealings with others, and with what measure we mete it shall be measured unto us.

6. Moats and Beams

Fault-finding is further condemned. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, had grown intensely self-conscious and critical, and were continually thanking God they were not as other men were.

This spirit had made them offensive in the sight of God and men, and Jesus rebuked it with the most caustic condemnation.

He told them they were trying to extract a tiny particle or thin splinter from a brother's eye while they could not see and were not aware of the big beam of wood that was sticking out of their own eye (more paradoxical speech).

Self-esteem and censoriousness are deeply related.

It is always easier to be critical than correct, and in proportion as we think that we are right we think that others are wrong, so that the more perfect we think ourselves the more imperfect we think others are. We make ourselves appear whiter by casting shadows on others. So the self-righteous man is generally uncharitable in his judgments. In proportion also as we fix our gaze on the faults of others are we blind to our own.

We should get rid of this self-righteous, fault-finding spirit. Judge not that ye be not judged, and consider thyself lest thou also be tempted.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. If you have enemies, how do you come to have them?
2. What are we first to do when we have wronged others?
3. Is the Golden Rule a practical one in business and everyday life?
4. Are justice and mercy incompatible?
5. How can we get rid of the fault-finding spirit?

LESSON VII—FEBRUARY 15

Jesus the Friend of Sinners

Lesson: Luke 7.

Golden Text: Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15.

Devotional Reading: Romans 5:1–8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Jesus the Friend of Sinners.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Jesus Transforming Sinners.

Lesson Text: Luke 7:36–50

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And behold, a woman who was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment,

38 And standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Teacher, say on.

41 A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred shillings, and the other fifty.

42 When they had not *wherewith* to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins?

50 And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Pharisee.

2. The Fallen Woman.

3. How the Woman's Act Was Regarded.

4. The Woman as the Central Figure.

This scene is full of human nature and divine grace.

Two types of sinners stand sharply revealed in its intense light, and the power of Jesus to save is illustrated.

1. The Pharisee

Simon the Pharisee is the first figure in the scene. Being a Pharisee, he had the ideas and instincts of his class.

Traditional and formal in his religion, cold, critical and exclusive in spirit, he prided himself on his righteousness and maintained towards others a lofty air of separation and haughty superiority.

" Sinner," the last word that he would ever have thought of applying to himself, was a contemptuous epithet that he applied freely to others.

Jesus frequently came into collision with this class.

He was a disappointment and an offense to them. His unworldliness and spirituality, his purity and gentleness and meekness, his kingdom of brotherhood and love, thwarted all their ambitions and exasperated their pride beyond measure. They soon viewed him with distrust and suspicion, then their hostility grew into deadly hatred, and at last they fell upon him in murderous fury and crucified him on the cross.

Jesus, on the other hand, dared to face them and let loose upon them the most terrible lightnings of judgment that ever issued from his lips.

Simon belonged to this class, and yet he invited Jesus to dine at his house.

This indicates a fairer state of mind toward the young Galilean rabbi than the prevailing Pharisaic attitude, a disposition to cultivate some acquaintance with him and see what manner of man he was; he was even open to the conviction that he might be a prophet.

Yet while opening his house to him, his hospitality was not unstinted and hearty but was lacking in the gracious courtesies and even in some of the common civilities of the occasion. The Pharisee did not greet his guest with a kiss and anoint him with oil and furnish him with water to cleanse and cool his feet—marks of respect that would have been paid to an honored visitor. Simon accorded Jesus rather shabby treatment—a fact that Jesus did not fail to notice, and it drew from him a quiet rebuke that the Pharisee must have keenly felt.

The fact also that Jesus accepted this invitation and dined with Simon sets him in a favorable light as willing to meet any one on terms of common friendship. How often can prejudices be removed and alienation be allayed by the simple process of a friendly meeting, and especially of sitting down to dine together. Most of our individual and social alienations and even our class divisions are aggravated if not caused by the lack of mutual acquaintance, and when men are simply willing to sit down together they are going far towards removing such causes of separation and meeting on common human grounds.

Such is the first figure in this scene: an orthodox formalist of eminent respectability, cool, critical and calculating, willing to show Jesus some attention, but withholding from him the full measure of honor and careful to keep aloof from him.

2. The Fallen Woman

The second figure in the scene was that pitiable character, a fallen woman. Innocence, temptation, and fall had been her life story. Doubtless fair had been the bloom of her youth, subtle and seductive had been the wiles of her betrayer, and now bitter and despairing were the depths of her degradation. She was now a social outcast, and life had no more joy and hope for her.

But one day an event happened that changed the whole course and character of her unhappy life: she heard Jesus.

His gracious personality and winning words must have produced a profound impression upon her. Possibly she heard him tell the scribes and Pharisees that publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before them. His invitations and promises were the first words of hope and help that had fallen upon her since she had been cast out of society. The germs of goodness were not yet dead in her heart, purity was still a beautiful vision which she longed to attain, and she resolved that she would see Jesus and express her devotion to him.

The feast of Simon gave her this opportunity. Oriental custom permitted uninvited persons to enter such a place, separated from the public court only by hanging curtains, and converse with the guests. The fallen woman passed in unnoticed and stood behind Jesus, who like the others reclined at the table on a couch with his feet extending behind him. The woman had an alabaster jar of ointment, a costly and

fragrant unguent that was very soothing and agreeable when applied to the body. It was her intention to anoint Jesus with this precious ointment, an act which was an extravagant honor.

When, however, she found herself in his presence she was overcome with feeling and burst into tears. Her sense of sin and shame and the thought of his purity and pardoning grace opened the fountain of her heart and flowed forth in a flood of penitence and faith.

Her tears fell like rain upon the feet of Jesus.

With her loosened hair she wiped off the stains, kissed his feet, and anointed him with her fragrant ointment.

All this seems foreign if not repugnant to our sense of propriety and delicacy, but it was in accordance with oriental custom and expression of respect. We forget that when the customs of foreigners look strange to us, our customs look equally strange to them.

Such customs are a language in which human emotions are expressed, and we all know how our language is subject to misinterpretation and the best intentions may be turned into an offense. We should be careful of such misleading constructions put upon the words and acts of others and endeavor to see through them into their meaning and heart.

Here again social classes may offend each other by such misunderstanding and even international relations may be strained and disrupted and wars precipitated by some unfortunate word or act that is misinterpreted.

These are the two contrasted figures in this scene: at the one extreme a Pharisee, self-righteous in himself and critical towards others; and at the other a fallen woman pouring out her penitence in tears and showing her devotion to Jesus.

3. How the Woman's Act Was Regarded

How was the act of the woman regarded and received? The Pharisee looked at it from his point of view. He thought within himself that if this young rabbi were a prophet he would have perceived that the woman that had touched him was a sinner.

How the proud self-righteous Pharisee recoiled from that polluting touch! Not to touch others or be touched by them, to keep

himself separate and aloof from others, this was the Pharisee's social creed and ruling passion.

We are ever in danger of cherishing the same selfish and exclusive spirit. Our sense of our superior birth and ancestry, or wealth and social position, or orthodoxy of creed and church builds around us a wall to shut ourselves in and others out from our class and condition and especially from our fellowship, and this is one of the greatest evils in our human world.

There is a way in which we are to keep ourselves separate from sinners: we are to have no fellowship or sympathy with them in their sin.

But we are not to withdraw from them in a spirit of self-righteous superiority.

The hard cold stare that "sinners" sometimes receive from the "righteous" repels and embitters them. Fallen women are especially subject to this unchristian cruel treatment. We are all fallen sinners, and instead of recoiling from the touch of others, we should clasp hands and help one another up.

Jesus showed Simon a more excellent way.

"Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," was the gentle introduction with which Jesus opened his rebuke. The Pharisee was ready to hear and said, "Teacher, say on." This was a good approach to the subject from both sides and such an opening to our endeavor to discuss and settle our differences promises good results.

The parable of the two debtors illustrated the principle Jesus had in mind. One debtor owed five hundred shillings and the other fifty, and both were forgiven with equal generosity and grace. "Which of them therefore will love him most?" was the question with which Jesus submitted the point to Simon.

He often did this, not imposing his view upon others by his dogmatic authority, but taking them into partnership with himself and submitting his case to their judgment and thus respecting their rights and winning their confidence and bringing them into agreement with his view.

The Pharisee answered carelessly as though it were a matter in which he had no personal interest. "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most."

Jesus then gave a surprising turn to the parable.

He pointed out how he had entered Simon's house and been received with scant courtesy as no water had been offered him for his feet and his head had not been anointed with oil; but in contrast with this cool reception the fallen woman had kissed and washed his feet with her tears and anointed his head with precious ointment. He therefore declared her sins forgiven and drew the conclusion that she loved much: and then he added with evident reference to Simon, " but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The principle of this judgment is that one's sense of the depth of his sin and of the fulness and blessing of his pardon will determine the warmth and power of his love.

This discloses the fact that we cannot tell the relative standing of people in the sight of God by their social position.

The woman was at the depth of degradation on this scale, and the Pharisee at the top of outward respectability and righteousness, and yet the one had a far richer grace of forgiveness and depth of love in her soul than the other. The last may be first and the first last.

Worldly standards and appearances do not rule in the kingdom of grace, and at last outward appearances shall be stripped off and we shall stand naked in our true character before the judgment seat of God.

4. The Woman as the Central Figure

Simon now drops out of the picture and we hear of him no more, and the woman becomes the central figure in the scene. The Pharisee has been silenced and disappears into oblivion, and Jesus now turns to the penitent woman.

He did not lecture her on the enormity of her sin, but simply said to her, " Thy sins are forgiven."

That is the way of Jesus with penitent souls. No matter how deep and grave are their sins, how socially unpopular and outcast they may be, he at once admits them into his fellowship and saving grace and they are washed clean. Even though his own church refuses to receive them and casts them out, yet he takes them in.

He came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance, and this work he is doing still.

Instantly the guests began to say, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" That was a question that on other occasions troubled the Jews, especially the Pharisees. They believed that only God could forgive sin, and in this they were right. But they were wrong in their application of their principle, for they did not know or believe that Jesus was the Son of God with power on earth to forgive sin.

Jesus, unmindful of their critical thought, said unto the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

Here is salvation in its simplicity and saving power.

A fallen woman comes up out of the depths of her sin and stands penitent in the presence of Jesus; no words pass between them, only a few simple acts, chiefly her tears, show her penitence and her devotion to him.

Proud Pharisees are there to censure any recognition of such a person. But Jesus calmly pronounces her sins forgiven and sends her away in peace. The soul that came to him vile went away washed clean.

The dealing of Jesus with fallen women is one of the wonders of his ministry. No other class of sinners are so cut off from human sympathy and help, are so hard to reach and are considered so hopeless. Jesus dealt with them with perfect frankness and freeness, and yet never drew a shadow of suspicion on himself. All his relations with them were marked with utmost delicacy and refinement, wisdom and tact, sympathy and love. He attracted them to himself by his grace, melted them into penitence and tears, and sent them away purified and peaceful.

As he saved these lost ones, so can he save all sinners.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What good points did the Pharisees have?
2. Why was it so hard to convert them to Christ?
3. Is the social evil growing worse or better in our day?
4. Who may be the worst sinners in the world and in the church?
5. How can we cultivate the spirit of seeing good in all classes?

LESSON VIII—FEBRUARY 22

Jesus Bearing the Good Tidings

Lesson: Luke 8.

Golden Text: He went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God. Luke 8:1.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 61:1–3, 10, 11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: "Take Heed how ye Hear."

Topic for Young People and Adults: Cultivating an Honest and Good Heart.

Lesson Text: Luke 8:1–15

1 And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with him the twelve,

2 And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

3 And Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance.

4 And when a great multitude came together, and they of every city resorted unto him, he spake by a parable:

5 The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it.

6 And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

7 And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him what this parable might be.

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved.

13 And those on the rock *are* they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Missionary Tour.

2. Wayside Paths.

3. Stony Soil.
4. Thorns.
5. Good Ground.
6. How We Hear.

Our lesson opens with a missionary tour of Jesus, which will illustrate other journeys he made from Capernaum as his headquarters out through Galilee. He took with him his twelve disciples so that they might be trained under his leadership for the wider work they were to do after his departure as they went out to the Gentiles and started the kingdom of God over the world.

1. A Missionary Tour

He went from town to town " preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God," this kingdom consisting of both doctrines and deeds, doctrines concerning God and man, sin and salvation, and deeds of healing and forgiveness, both doctrines and deeds being truly " glad tidings " to sinful and suffering people.

This kingdom has come down to us and we are still proclaiming it and making good its glad tidings in every land and home and heart where it is being truly received and lived.

Not only the twelve disciples accompanied Jesus, but it is strikingly significant that he was also accompanied by " certain women," one of whom was Mary Magdalene, who had been healed of evil spirits, and another being the wife of an officer at Herod's court, showing that the gospel was already penetrating into the upper circles of society. These women " ministered unto them of their substance," showing that they had some means and were liberal in supporting the work of Jesus, for of course it took some money to conduct their evangelistic campaign however small its numbers and simple its plan.

Women have always been foremost in accepting the gospel in missionary lands, and to this day they are specially prominent in supporting missions both at home and abroad; and our great missionary boards have their springs back in countless women's missionary societies in local churches that send steady streams of money into their treasuries.

2. Wayside Paths

On the shore of Lake Galilee, standing on its sandy beach and sitting on its grassy banks were the assembled multitude, while from the pulpit of a fishing boat Jesus delivered to them the parable of the sower.

It appears to have been the first instance of his using this mode of teaching and seems to have surprised the disciples so that they asked him privately for an explanation of it.

A parable is a short story with a moral point, a dramatized picture of the truth.

An abstract statement of truth is difficult to visualize and grasp and is apt to be uninteresting. Put the same truth in the form of a story or illustration drawn from the familiar things of life, and instantly it takes on form and color and begins to attract attention.

Jesus was a master of illustration.

The main object of the parable of the sower is to describe four classes of hearers with a view to persuading us to take heed how we hear.

First, are those that receive the seed of truth on the wayside.

The wayside is the path or road running through the grainfield, which was traveled over so that it was beaten down bare and hard, and seeds falling on it were quickly picked up by the greedy, watchful birds that were hovering about.

Our hearts are thus being traveled over and beaten down.

First come our sins trampling over us with their hardening hoofs. Every wrong thought and deed leaves a hardened footprint in the soul. The farmer will not walk across his wheatfield that is just growing green, for every step may crush some tender blade and destroy so much golden grain. This is what we are doing when we are walking across the fine wheatfield of our own hearts and rudely crushing many a tender plant that would yield us a rich harvest.

Then comes the great traffic of the world rolling its iron wheels over us. There are pleasures that destroy the relish for spiritual things. The coarse love of gain tramples upon our finer sensibilities until it has beaten them down hard as a stone pavement. What chance have the seeds of truth falling on such hearts to take root and grow? The mind may listen, but the heart is so insensible that it receives no impression.

Quickly some worldly thought or desire comes and snatches the truth away. Upon hardened sinners and worldly people the gospel falls as upon beaten ground.

3. Stony Soil

The second class of hearers are those that receive the seed upon stony soil. By stony ground is meant an underlying sheet of rock which is barely covered with a thin layer of earth. The seeds falling upon this warm soil quickly take root, and when the roots strike the barrier of rock the plant all the more luxuriantly shoots up into stalk. But having no depth of earth and permanent source of moisture, under the scorching sun it soon withers.

This represents a ready reception of the truth and a fair promise thwarted by a fatal deficiency.

There is no depth of earth, no deeply rooted convictions. The joyful reception of the truth is only superficial and temporary.

This may be due to an emotional nature that responds to every appeal as a leaf flutters before every breath of air. There are people that like to have their feelings stirred, that cry as easily as children, to whom even tears are a kind of luxury.

Or this temporary conversion may be due to the charm of eloquence and music that lays a spell upon the mind. Especially may it be induced by religious excitement that is affecting minds with its social contagion.

What becomes of this truth that shoots up so rapidly? It soon withers.

These temporary causes cease to act. The excitement passes away, and the ordinary experiences return. The old temptations, together with new trials, the dull routine, come back and the old nature resumes its sway.

A thin surface of emotion has been stirred up, but the old heart of rock lies below unchanged. Such converts do not last and are soon ready for the next revival.

4. Thorns

The third class are those that receive the truth among thorns. By thorns are meant the old seeds and roots that remain in the ground after it has been plowed and the good grain has been sown. These grew up

more rapidly than the wheat, so that they took away its nourishment, shut out its light, and thus choked its growth.

These thorns are the old dispositions, desires and habits of the unconverted nature.

At the time of conversion they were cut down and plowed under and seemed to be removed. But they are not wholly destroyed and dead, and by and by they will begin to sprout and shoot up. Old habits will struggle to assert themselves. If they are allowed to get a start, they will grow rapidly and choke the new life, for they grow at its expense.

Cares and riches and pleasures are some of these old thorn-roots.

Though the gospel seed is planted in the heart, yet the anxieties of life remain to be borne and battled with, temptations continue to play upon the new seed, and if the old thorns are permitted to sprout in the heart they will check the growth of purity and peace.

Worry kills worship.

They that like Martha thus overburden and distract themselves will lose the good part which Mary chose.

5. Good Ground

The fourth class of hearers are those that receive the seed into good ground. Good ground is that which is well broken up, has depth of earth, and upon which the seed springs up and bears thirty and sixty and a hundred fold.

This represents a good and honest heart, which having heard the word keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience.

In what sense is such a heart good? Not in the sense that it is naturally and perfectly good, for there is no such human heart in any human breast. But some hearts are naturally better fitted for receiving truth, are more open and sincere and earnest than others, and in this sense are comparatively good.

But the full meaning of the phrase doubtless points to a heart that has been furrowed by the plow of the Holy Spirit.

When a heart feels its guilt and need of a Saviour, when it repents of its sin, clearing away the old roots, that heart is good ground in which

the gospel will take root and grow. A mind open to all truth from whatever quarter it comes, candor in examining its evidences, the scientific spirit of simple truth-seeking is the primary virtue of the mind in all fields.

We should desire and seek to know reality whatever may be the consequences, though our heaven falls. The cry for reality is the dominant note of our day.

This is the spirit and demand of the Bible itself which all the way through bids us prove all things and hold fast only that which is true and good. The follower of him who declared, "I am the truth," should be eminently marked by this spirit of truth-seeking and especially in relation to Christ himself. The truth of the gospel will then not simply fall on the surface of the mind where every passing thought may carry it off, but it will receive a sympathetic welcome and drop deep into the heart.

Such truth does not simply play upon the feelings, but it takes hold of the convictions; it is not mixed up and choked with sinful seeds and roots, but kept pure and given the whole field.

6. How We Hear

The main point of the parable is the one Jesus himself drew from it, that we should take heed how we hear. Preaching is thought to be a difficult thing involving great responsibility, but hearing is generally supposed to be easy, involving little or no effort or responsibility.

But in fact hearing is in a sense as difficult and responsible work as preaching or teaching.

There is plenty of poor preaching abroad in the land, and no class is more aware of this than preachers themselves, but there is vastly more poor hearing. Good hearing implies preparation and a right state of mind, sympathetic attention to and concentration of thought upon the subject; and these are difficult states and exercises of mind.

But the main point in hearing is the purpose to obey the truth received.

Hearing that does not lead to doing is folly that may cost us disastrously. It makes some difference to the merchant how he hears the

orders of his customers; or to the locomotive engineer how he reads the orders of the train dispatcher; or to the soldier how he hears the commands of his officer; or to the patient how he hears the directions of his physician; or to one asleep in a burning house how he hears the voice calling upon him to escape for his life.

On the way we hear may depend life itself. Infinitely greater difference does it make how we hear the voice of the Lord Jesus calling upon us to repent and believe upon him and do his will. On such hearing depends life eternal.

Doing is also one of the most effective means of understanding the truth received. We do not know anything thoroughly until we do it. We may hear much about music or any other art, but we do not really know music until we practice it and embed it in the unconscious habits of our nervous system. After we have entered the kingdom of knowledge through the door of obedience we can then hear about it understandingly.

One reason we hear so poorly is that we obey so imperfectly.

If we are willing to do we shall know the truth as we hear it.

Therefore every one that heareth these sayings of the Lord Jesus and doeth them is like a man that built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings and doeth them not is like a man that built his house upon the sand; and when the floods came and the winds blew, it fell; and great was the fall of it. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How many parables were spoken by Jesus?
2. What parables are in the Old Testament?
3. Have any teachers and writers other than Jesus used parables?
4. Name the distinctive features of these four kinds of soil.
5. How can we improve the soil of our hearts?
6. How can we cultivate good hearing?

LESSON IX—MARCH 1

Jesus Sending Forth Missionaries

Lesson: Luke 9:1–10:24.

Golden Text: The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:2.

Devotional Reading: Romans 10:8b–15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Helpers of Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Our Missionary Task.

Lesson Text: Luke 10:1–11, 17, 21–22

1 Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come.

2 And he said unto them, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.

4 Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes; and salute no man on the way.

5 And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house.

6 And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say,

11 Even the dust from your city, that cleaveth to our feet, we wipe off against you: nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh.

17 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name.

21 In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.

22 All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal *him*.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Disciples Sent Forth in Pairs.

2. Personal Directions.

3. Their Work.
4. Procedure if Rejected.
5. A Joyful Return.

Jesus had recently returned from a missionary tour through Galilee in which he took with him the twelve disciples and some women, but on this tour seventy disciples were sent alone.

There comes a time when the scholar must proceed in his studies without the instruction of the teacher, and the apprentice must do his work without the guidance of the master workman. The same principle applies in Christian service.

> We come to Jesus to be with him so as to be taught his will and way and acquire his spirit, and then we must go out from him and in a measure serve alone in our appointed field of work. And yet the Master is with us always even unto the end of the world.

1. Disciples Sent Forth in Pairs

The seventy disciples were chosen and sent out in pairs into the cities and villages to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus.

> Such preparatory work would greatly facilitate his work in acquainting the people with his teaching and kingdom and putting them in an expectant and receptive state of mind.

It is usual with us, when we are about to inaugurate an evangelistic campaign, to prepare the way for it by services conducted by the pastors, and then the special evangelist can find the people and meetings ready for him.

> We all can be forerunners to prepare the way for Christ.

All our teaching and preaching and personal influence put the minds and hearts of others in such a state of knowledge and receptivity that the Holy Spirit can work upon them.

These disciples were sent forth two by two, for such workers can do best by working together. They sustain and encourage each other, and they can divide the work so as to save time and increase their efficiency. Missionaries in foreign lands surrounded by the darkness of heathenism are in special need of mutual companionship and support.

A pressing reason given by Jesus for sending forth these missionaries

was that "the harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few." Jesus looked out over the populous region of Galilee and Perea and saw it swarming with human beings that were a vast harvest for his kingdom. Over the same region looked the Roman governor and saw in it only a harvest of taxes.

The field of the kingdom now has widened out until it takes in the world, and its upwards of two billions of human beings are a harvest that belong to Christ.

The fences and barriers that once shut this field from the Christian missionary are now removed, and we can go anywhere and begin to reap.

The scarcity of laborers impressed Jesus with the need of more reapers, and he taught his disciples to pray that they might be sent, and then he bade them go themselves, thus teaching them to answer their own prayer, a principle in relation to prayer that runs all through the Bible and through our Christian experience.

We are first to pray in all our affairs and then immediately set to work to fulfil our own prayer.

"Trust God and keep your powder dry," said Cromwell to his soldiers, and Dr. Chalmers expressed the same truth in saying, "We are to pray as though all depended on God and then work as though all depended on us."

How urgent is the call today for laborers, as all our boards and fields call for more ministers and missionaries to go out and take possession of the vast fields that are now ready for the harvest.

It is the duty of every disciple to fulfil some part in carrying on this work, and young people considering their life work are to face the question whether they are called to full-time service.

2. Personal Directions

Personal directions were given to these disciples. Warning was given them that they were going out as lambs among wolves.

They were not lured into this service with the prospect and promise of easy work and a large salary, but were plainly shown the rough and dangerous road they were to travel.

Jewish bigotry and Roman oppression would beset them, and they would need to take their lives in their hands.

Missionary work is still dangerous business in some lands, and it calls for some spirit of bravery and sacrifice everywhere.

Lambs among wolves—their innocence was to be their protection.

They were not to load themselves down with baggage and means of comfort, but go just as they were. A short journey through neighboring villages did not call for much equipment, and each day would supply its own need. This of course is no hard-and-fast rule for all occasions, and on a later occasion (Luke 22:35–36) Jesus gave opposite directions.

Missionaries and ministers are to be governed by common sense and adapt their arrangements to their needs as modified by the conditions of their day.

On entering a house they were to greet it with the usual salutation, equivalent to saying, "Good morning," or "Good day." Thus they were not to break in abruptly with their message but were to begin with the ordinary courtesies of life and let these naturally lead on to the more serious business of the kingdom.

Religion is so closely related to all the affairs of life that there is no difficulty in introducing it in connection with any subject.

Jesus asked the woman of Samaria for a drink of water and was then soon talking with her about the water of life.

If they were given a welcome in a house they were to remain in it during their stay in that town and were to lose no time by changing their boarding place. Even their table manners were of sufficient importance to be made the subject of remark and advice by Jesus. They were not to be exacting and particular about their entertainment and thus make themselves disagreeable, but they were to win good will by their quiet behavior and appreciative spirit. Guests—even ministers—have been known to make their presence unpleasant and annoying by their irritating and offensive ways, and in the case of such guests the relief of their going exceeds the welcome of their coming.

Beautiful behavior is part of Christian character and should be exhibited by every follower of Jesus, but especially by those that go before to prepare the way for him.

These disciples were not to pay for their entertainment, and yet they were not beggars, for no pay was expected or would be received for entertainment in the East where such hospitality was the custom; and, besides, they were rendering service for more than they received, "for the laborer is worthy of his hire."

They were to pronounce a benediction upon a home on entering it and leave a blessing when going out from it, and such is the spirit in which we should receive and remunerate hospitality.

3. Their Work

They were to begin their work by healing the sick.

Their first work was not to be an abrupt announcement of a message which the people would not understand, but they were to begin on a lower level where the people already stood.

Healing was something that everybody would appreciate, and it would open the way for the deeper healing of the soul. Bodily disease was everywhere prevalent among the people, and it was only one symptom of the root disease of sin: cutting off this branch might enable them to strike deeper and sever the tap root.

This direction is the beginning of medical missions.

Heathenism everywhere shows its helplessness in the presence of disease, and our Christian science and skill, hospitals and physicians, are ever going before the gospel and preparing the way for it.

Good works of all kinds give the gospel a kindly aspect and make it acceptable to the people.

The institutional church that ministers in many ways to human needs reaches many people with the gospel that would otherwise never enter a church door. We should embrace every opportunity to help people and thus we may win them into the kingdom.

These disciples were ever to accompany their healing with the message, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

The bodily healing was not the end in itself, but a means to higher ends.

Healing, good as it is, is a small blessing to confer on our human kind compared with the infinitely greater blessing of the kingdom of God. This kingdom means order and purity and peace from the center out through the whole circumference of life.

> Get the kingdom of God into the hearts of men, and all things will come right. Disease and all manner of evil will retire before it as darkness before light, and health and holiness and happiness will come.

4. Procedure if Rejected

What was to be done by these disciples if their message was rejected? If on entering a house "a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again."

> The effect of their presence in any house or city depended on what they encountered: their peace would bring peace to the friendly and would recoil from the hostile.

The effect of every agent or cause depends on the receptive nature of its object as well as upon its own nature. The result of the sculptor's chisel depends on whether it strikes sandstone or marble.

> The result of preaching the gospel everywhere depends on the nature of the hearts on which it falls: to some it is a savor of life unto life, and to others a savor of death unto death.

When their message was rejected in any city these disciples were to go out into its streets and wipe off the dust of their feet against it, an Oriental symbol of complete separation from its guilt.

> They had done their duty in their rapid tour, and the city rejecting them had to bear its own responsibility.

This act of wiping the dust off their feet did not add anything to the city's condemnation: it was only an outer expression of an inner fact. Our condemnation is just as sure, if we reject the gospel, whether it is marked by any such outward expression or not.

> We cannot reject this saving grace and then be as good as ever: some guilt has been incurred and some worth has been lost to our souls.

Yet even in condemning a city the disciples were to give it a final assurance that the door of grace was not finally shut against them. "nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh."

The possibility of repentance is always left with the unbeliever.

5. A Joyful Return

"And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name." Such results from their preaching were highly encouraging to them as proving that the gospel of their Master was the power of God unto salvation to all them that believed and even had power to subdue the spirits of evil into subjection.

This strengthened them for further service and especially did it prepare them for the great trial that was to come upon them in the crucifixion of their Lord that would seem to turn all their faith into falsity and all their light into darkness.

We seem to catch a somewhat too optimistic note in their joy as though they thought the whole victory over evil was now won and that henceforth they would have a straight and smooth path to triumph. But dark days were yet to come and the greatest darkness that ever fell upon Jesus and his cause was already looming black and terrible upon the horizon.

Yet they passed through the storm masterfully and they were ready for all trials, believing they would lead to final victory.

We also have reasons to rejoice in our work, for our eyes "have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," and we believe that we are ever passing through the shadows of the world into the fuller coming of the kingdom.

Jesus himself shared in the joy of this return and uttered a wonderful prayer of thanksgiving.

He thanked the Father that great spiritual verities that were hidden from the blind eyes of the wise were yet revealed to babes of humility and faith, and that all things had been delivered into his hands by his Father.

Such were his faith and power by which he conquered sin and death and is now conquering the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we find out into what fields we are sent?
2. How can Sunday school teachers get directions for their work?
3. In what respects does our work differ from that of these disciples?
4. Should Sunday school teachers study how to be tactful and courteous with their pupils?
5. Did Jesus need encouragement in his work to sustain his faith?

LESSON X—MARCH 8

The Good Samaritan

Lesson: Luke 10:25–37.

Golden Text: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Leviticus 19:18.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 5:38–48.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Serving and Sharing.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Stewardship of Life.

Lesson Text: Luke 10:25–37

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

30 Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion,

34 And came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on *them* oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee.

36 Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?

37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Good Question with Sinister Purpose.***
2. ***A Correct Biblical Answer.***
3. ***Another Unnecessary Question with Wrong Motive.***
4. ***An Answer in a Superb Parable.***
5. ***Go and Do Likewise.***

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the finest jewels in the treasury of parables that Jesus left to the world; and as the pearl is secreted out of the irritation and suffering of the shellfish, so this precious parable was drawn from Jesus by a sinister attack upon him by one of the scribes. Never did Jesus show up to better advantage than in these dialectical efforts of his enemies to catch him in a trap and it was usually a sorry day with them when they met him in one of these combats.

This parable is the product of one of the keenest and subtlest of these hostile schemes.

1. Good Question with Sinister Purpose

A certain lawyer stood up and " made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

There are good points in this question.

It is an inquiry worthy of our deepest interest and highest effort. It strikes through all outer circumstances into the inmost core of existence and lays hold of eternal life itself; and it is not concerned simply with the passing forms and needs of life, but it looks into the future and asks for life eternal.

Compared with this question, all current questions of the day are dust in the balance.

The question also realizes that something must be done to inherit eternal life.

This life is not a natural possession and birthright of the soul, but it must be acquired; and it will not come itself, but must be secured through personal effort.

It is right to be interested in the eternal welfare of others, but no one is prepared for this until he has obtained eternal life in himself.

The question is also put to the right teacher.

Jesus is a Master who has authority on earth to answer this question; and to whom else can we go, for he only has words of eternal life?

Yet good as is the question, there are some unfavorable points in the questioner.

He was a lawyer, a teacher of the law, and it was his duty and very profession to know the answer. He was either ignorant of his own business, or else he was feigning ignorance, possibly for some sinister purpose.

This latter supposition is confirmed by the statement that he "made trial" of Jesus. Evidently he was trying to entangle the Nazarene and catch him by a cunning device. He was really seeking, not instruction, but controversy, not truth but victory.

Everything depends on the purpose for which and the spirit in which we ask a question.

If we are sincere inquirers we shall find the way; but if we are trying to ensnare others, we are likely to get caught ourselves.

Let us ask great questions as honest inquirers and the answer will be found and we shall find eternal life.

2. A Correct Biblical Answer

Jesus answered the lawyer's question by asking him another. The great Teacher was a master of dialectics, and no captious critic ever tried to catch him without getting caught himself. "What is written in the law?"

There was a keen home thrust in that question. The lawyer was referred to the law.

He was shown to be ignorant of his own profession and sent back to his own book. He did not need to ask this question, for he already had the means of answering it. It was not more light that he needed, but more use of the light he had. If we knew what is written in our Bible we would be saved from many questions and perplexities.

We are often searching for truth far off when the commandment is nigh us, even in our heart.

Mr. Edison searched all the continents and the seven seas to find a fiber for his incandescent lamp, trying out no fewer than 7,000 substances, and then found it in the rim of the palm-leaf fan in his hand.

There is enough written for us already, and we do not need more light but a clearer eye to see the light we have.

"How readest thou?" Another home thrust. It was the lawyer's profession to read and interpret the law, and yet he was missing its main point.

How we read is as important as what we read.

We can read truth so as to pervert it into error and turn its life into death. We can read the Bible systematically, meditatively, prayerfully and obediently, so as to grasp its truth and absorb its spirit; or we can read it hurriedly, superficially, thoughtlessly, sceptically, and get no good out of it but may get much harm to ourselves.

If we would read deeper into the Bible we would see more in it and get more out of it and have fewer perplexing questions to trouble us.

The lawyer, roused to some sense of the position in which his question had put himself, answered out of the law. His answer was taken from the Old Testament (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) and is the same answer that is given in the New Testament.

The answer makes the root of eternal life love for God.

We live by love and out of no other root can life grow. Nothing else can be right until we get right with God as no point on the circumference can be right as long as the center is in the wrong place.

This love for God should be fervent, strong and intelligent. And having found God, it must next find man.

The closer we get to God the nearer we get to one another and every man then becomes our neighbor.

So spoke the lawyer; and Jesus commended his answer and bade him do this and assured him he would have eternal life. Thus responsibility was driven home upon the lawyer.

He knew more than he did. His creed was right, but his conduct was wrong.

We all know enough to save us. It is because our conduct lags so far behind our conscience that we get lost. If we will only do what we know we shall live. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Obedience is the surest way of knowing spiritual truth.

3. Another Unnecessary Question with a Wrong Motive

The consistent course for the lawyer to have followed, had he been a sincere inquirer, would have been to begin the practice of his own doctrine. But this was not the point he had in view, and he now gave another twist to the argument. "But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?"

This was another unnecessary question with a wrong motive.

The question was unnecessary because he was a professional student and expositor of a Bible which told him the truth and gave him broad views on this point.

But Jewish pride and exclusiveness had made "neighbor" a narrow word that never got very far from home. Its breadth of human sympathy had been contracted into selfish caste.

The question, "Who is my neighbor?" is likely to be the old heresy of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The man that begins to ask this question has already lost touch with humanity and contracted his horizon to a narrow circle. It is this question that splits society into classes and arrays races and ranks against one another.

Every human being is our neighbor. That poor man, that tempted man, that black man, that heathen man, that far-off man: he is your neighbor.

The purpose of this question was even worse than its form: "desiring to justify himself." This, then, was the poisoned point of his inquiry. He was not seeking the way of life that he might walk in it, but he was aiming at justifying himself. The argument of Jesus was driving him into a painful and humiliating self-condemnation, and he made desperate efforts at self-justification.

Of how many excuses and subterfuges and lies is self-justification the root?

We all become ingenious and expert at standing up before the bar of conscience in the attempt to justify ourselves. "I have done as well as could have been expected." "I am no worse than other men." These are the thin excuses and miserable pleas with which we try to de-

ceive ourselves and hide our guilt from God himself. Coming before God in this spirit, we shall not find the way of life.

> Self-justification is only wrapping more closely around us the filthy rags of our self-righteousness. We shall find eternal life only when we come confessing ourselves self-condemned and crying, " God be merciful to me a sinner."

4. An Answer in a Superb Parable

It was at this point that Jesus introduced his superb parable. The steep rocky road running down from Jerusalem to Jericho was familiar to his hearers and may have been in plain view. The narrow path ran through defiles full of caves and hiding-places that were infested with robbers.

Down this road came a solitary traveler peacefully pursuing his journey, when, suddenly, highwaymen seized him, robbed and stripped him, beat him, and left him lying unconscious and bleeding on the stones.

A priest came down the same road, and, seeing the wounded man, crossed over to the other side and unconcernedly passed by. A Levite did the same thing.

> There is always another side on the way of life along which we can slip and escape many of the burdens of our fellowmen.
>
> Priest and Levite, minister and deacon, the professional religionists, had no time or sympathy for a robbed and wounded man; there was no money in his pocket for them and he was not their neighbor.

Then came a Samaritan, a layman, a man of another race and religion, and a man with whom the Jews were at enmity; when he saw the wounded Jew, he had compassion on him and went over to him and treated him as a brother. He bound up his wounds and then " set him on his own beast."

> This pregnant little touch in the narrative is the very heart of the parable, the milk of human kindness in the core of the hard rough story.

The Samaritan put the wounded Jew in his own place, treated him as his own self. His own comfort was in having this stranger comfortable. His consciousness was of the other man. " Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." " In all their affliction he was afflicted."

This is the essence of Samaritanism, the very spirit of the gospel and the blood-red heart of the cross.

This is the wonderful answer that Jesus gave to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" This is the daring answer he gave to the Jews, holding up before them a despised Samaritan as an example, rebuking their formal selfish hypocrisy, and showing them by one they counted a heretic and a heathen what true religion is.

5. Go and Do Likewise

Having drawn this picture Jesus now submitted to the lawyer which of these three was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves.

The great Teacher made the truth so plain and convincing and compelling that he was willing to leave the answer to the captious critic himself.

Christianity grounds itself down on such plain and practical principles of life and duty that it dares to submit its reasonableness and obligation to our own minds and consciences. And the lawyer answered, "He that showed mercy on him." Shut up so closely to the truth, he could hardly go wrong.

The insincere questioner was himself at last gently but surely forced to tell the truth.

Yet Jesus had told him nothing that was not clearly in his own Bible and that he did not know. He simply put the case before him so as to draw the truth out of his own knowledge and conscience.

Again it is impressed upon us that it is not new truth we need so much as a clearer apprehension of and a better obedience to the truth we have.

The Master's parting word to the lawyer is also his command to us: "Go, and do thou likewise." This was the method and spirit of Jesus, and this should be the spirit in which we deal with people, especially with the burdened and wounded and lost.

This is the social gospel which we are to apply to all the problems in our crowded modern world.

It can be applied to the relation of employer and employee, to all our industrial strifes, to our political problems, national and inter-na-

tional, to the problems of charity, and to our individual relations with others.

If we want to slip through the world without sharing in these burdens and doing our part towards relieving them we may do so, and great will be our guilt. But if with the Good Samaritan and with Jesus himself we put ourselves in the place of others and bear their burdens, great will be our reward.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the use of questions in our life?
2. What are the points of a good question?
3. How should we answer questions?
4. Why is the parable of the Good Samaritan prized so highly?
5. Give some ways in which we can apply it in our lives.

LESSON XI—MARCH 15

Jesus Among Friends and Foes

Lesson: Luke 10:38–11:54.

Golden Text: Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. John 15:14.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 86:1–7.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Friendship with Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Dealing with Friend and Foe.

Lesson Text: Luke 10:38–42; 11:42–46, 52–54

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

42 But woe unto you Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over justice and the love of God: but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you Pharisees! for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces.

44 Woe unto you! for ye are as the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk.

45 And one of the laywers answering saith unto him, Teacher in saying this thou reproachest us also.

46 And he said, Woe unto you lawyers also! for ye load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

52 Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

53 And when he was come out from thence, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things;

54 Laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Active Martha.

2. Meditative Mary.

3. Strained Relations.

4. A Gentle Rebuke.
5. The One Thing Needful.
6. Pharisees and Lawyers.

This is the first recorded visit of Jesus to that house which, more than any other place during his ministry, seems to have been home to him. Here he found hospitality and rest and friendship, towards this place his tired feet frequently turned, and out of it he went to his cross.

He had no home of his own, and yet his spirit is making all homes better.

Two sisters were in this home who were strongly contrasted in character and conduct, and their behavior on this occasion presents an interesting study.

1. Active Martha

Martha appears to have been the elder of the two sisters and the head of the family, and on this occasion she received Jesus into her home. The coming of this notable guest with his disciples was no ordinary event, and she proposed to celebrate it worthily with a feast. As we find her serving at another feast (John 12:2), we may infer that she was an expert in the culinary art and serving was her forte. She evidently thought that the most effective way of entertaining her guests was to feed them, and presently great preparations were going on to this end. The busy bustling Martha was soon in a flutter and flurry of excitement, and the whole culinary department of the household was mobilized and astir with activity. There was a clatter of dishes in the kitchen, a running and rushing about through the house, and a general air of haste and confusion.

Soon "Martha was cumbered about much serving," drawn about in different directions, distracted, as the word means. She had set about preparing too large and elaborate a dinner, and the affair was getting beyond her power and patience. A multitude of details was bewildering her, and she knew not which way to turn.

In the meantime Jesus was discoursing in that same house on things of the highest import in words of heavenly wisdom, and Martha, immersed in the affairs of the kitchen, was missing a golden opportunity.

She is a type of an active and practical person, overloaded with work and worry, always busy to the point of distraction, but busy

on the lower side of life, buried in the kitchen or office and seldom rising into the higher regions of thought, superabundant in labors but deficient in meditation.

Such people, it need not be said, are very useful and necessary in the world. They prepare our meals and mend our clothes and manufacture our goods and keep the home running and the world agoing. They are energetic in business, active in the temporal affairs of the church, they drive things and make them go all along the line.

At times they may seem to overdo things in their bustling activity and fussy ways, but we must give them great credit for their service, and while we are in the parlor enjoying "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" we should not forget that they are out in the kitchen preparing for us a wholesome and appetizing meal.

Mary may be more interesting after dinner, but Martha is more important before it.

2. Meditative Mary

In marked contrast with the active Martha on this occasion was the behavior of Mary. She "sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word." Her more passive and meditative nature drew her to him and made her a rapt listener to his wonderful speech. She sat at his feet in lowly humility and she heard his words as one eager to know the way of the kingdom of God.

Truth, in her view, must precede and guide conduct, the heart must muse in meditation before it can wisely pour itself out in action.

She was not sitting there in a state of lazy dreamy passivity, but her mind was active and masterful as she meditated upon the words of Jesus, and she was gathering deeper spirit for the fuller service of life. She was sitting at the feet of Jesus that she might rise stronger and be more serviceable than ever.

Mary, then, is a type of a meditative person, one that draws apart at times from busy activities for reading, meditation and communion with God.

Such persons may sit at the feet of profound thinkers who have written imperishable words in the world's literature, and from them

they absorb great thoughts and fresh inspiration; or they draw apart with friends and in confidential fellowship they enlarge and enrich one another's souls; or they sit at the feet of Jesus as he speaks out of the Word of God and they hold communion with him and with the Father through prayer, and their hearts burn within them as they muse on high and holy things.

Such meditation is the deepest and richest preparation for action.

Thought must ever precede conduct, we must know before we can do. The tree must silently gather nourishment out of the soil and moisture and out of the air and vital beams out of the sun and subtle radiations from all the stars before it can bloom, and we must drink in spiritual influences through all the roots and leaves of our being before we can ripen and bear fruit.

3. Strained Relations

At this point occurred an interruption that bordered close upon a quarrel between these two sisters. Martha had more on her hands than she could manage, and, thinking herself deserted and imposed upon by her sister, she grew impatient and irritable, and presently she gave way to her temper and created a painful scene.

Stepping up to Jesus with a decided quick movement that strongly suggested her impatience she said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

This curt utterance, which tries to be respectful and yet every word of which quivers with suppressed anger, was a stinging rebuke to Mary that must have made her face flash scarlet with astonishment and shame; and it dared to let its lash fall even upon Jesus himself.

Mary may have been somewhat derelict in the matter of helping to prepare the dinner, and then again she may not have been open to this charge. She may have done her part in helping her sister up to a certain point, or she may have thought that so elaborate a feast was unnecessary, or she may have been so drawn by the talk of Jesus that, pausing a moment to listen, she was soon unwittingly absorbed in his words.

However this may have been, Martha's indignant rebuke shows how

people of different temperaments are likely to misunderstand and blame one another.

The active Martha could not appreciate the meditative Mary.

She thought her sister was neglecting her duty and shirking her work in order that she might sit in dreamy languor and ease; and, besides, there was little use in merely listening to talk anyway, especially while a great dinner was being prepared and all hands were needed in the kitchen.

No doubt also Mary thought that Martha was too exacting and fussy about that dinner and that it would have been better for her sister to be listening to those wonderful words of Jesus than to be working and worrying out in that hot kitchen to get up a great feast when a simple repast was all that was needed.

There is a tendency for active practical people and passive meditative people to fall out.

The pushing hustler that always wants to take right hold of things and drive them through may have small respect for the thinker who sits and reads and meditates; he may suppose that such a man is of no use in the world and does not earn his salt. The thinker also may underrate the practical worker as a shallow and sordid man, and so he may fail to appreciate his real worth to the world.

We should all know that it takes different kinds of people to make the world, different types and temperaments to blend their varying gifts into a stronger and richer unity, and this should make us broad and fair and kind in judging one another.

4. A Gentle Rebuke

How did Jesus answer this rebuke and demand of Martha? He did not side with Martha against Mary, but rather took Mary's part and gently rebuked Martha herself: "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Jesus did not censure Martha for her activity in preparing the dinner; such work was necessary and good.

Active service is ever important and deserving of praise and reward.

But Jesus did intimate to Martha that her activity was one-sided and lacked a vital part.

She was putting the emphasis on the wrong place and was overlooking something immeasurably more important; she was intent on feeding the body and was missing the feast for the soul. Jesus did not care for any such rich dinner as Martha was preparing; she misjudged his taste; he had other meat to eat and cared more for Mary's sympathetic presence and meditative mood than for Martha's bustling preparation and highly spiced dishes. Outward service for Christ, the temporalities of the church that keep up and adorn his house and, so to speak, set a fine table for him, good as they are in their place, are of small value in his sight compared with the spirit in his disciples that brings them into full and fine fellowship with himself.

However active may be the life of service, though it be overflowing with labors, yet it is a poor and pitiful thing if it is simply burdened and distracted with the petty cares of the home and business of the world and even of the church, and lacks the one thing needful.

5. The One Thing Needful

What was this one thing that lifts all other things up into divine worth and beauty?

It is the good part which Mary chose; and she chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his words.

She sat at his feet in a threefold relation: Jesus was her Teacher, her Friend, and her Saviour.

A teacher gives us new thought, a richer mind, and this is something beyond price. Ruskin says that the greatest thing we can ever do for another is just to give that one a better thought, an uplifting ideal. Jesus is the Teacher at whose feet we may sit and learn the most splendid thoughts of God that lift our life towards the stars.

A friend gives fellowship and affection, and Jesus is the " Friend above all others," the Lover of our souls whose fellowship and love will satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts. A Saviour is needed to cleanse away our sin and impart eternal life, and Jesus only has this power on earth. Without such a Teacher and Friend and Saviour how low and petty and

sordid are all the pursuits and passions of this life! They are simply the "many things" that distract and trouble us.

But give us the "one thing needful," let us sit at the feet of Jesus as our Teacher and Friend and Lord, and his spirit in us will transform and transfigure us into purity and peace and power. And this good part shall never be taken away from us.

6. Pharisees and Lawyers

Our lesson passes to a later scene in the life of Jesus in which we find him in the midst of hostile Pharisees and lawyers and he speaks to them in his splendid audacity and scorn, unmasking their hypocrisy and their love of official station and street-corner piety.

Whereupon a lawyer spoke up and said, "Teacher, in saying this thou reproachest us also." The lawyer considered that he belonged to a class above such condemnation and he would not stand for it!

To reproach "us also" was attacking a privileged class and must not be tolerated.

Many are such persons who count themselves privileged characters whom the minister must not dare to criticize or censure.

Whereupon Jesus turned upon this lawyer and poured upon him as hot shot as and hotter than he had given the Pharisees. He rolls up against them a terrible catalogue of social sins and spares them not.

The proud and pompous lawyer who thought he was above criticism got more than he was looking for and was shown up in his true light! Some people who are even high in the church need to take warning from this!

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name and describe some other types of character than the active and the passive.
2. How can we be appreciative and just towards those that differ from us?
3. Why does it take all kinds of people to make the world?
4. Does "the good part" deprive us of other good things?
5. How could Jesus be so gentle in rebuking Martha and yet so sharp and severe with the lawyer?

LESSON XII—MARCH 22

The Use and Abuse of God's Gifts. (Temperance Lesson.)

Lesson: Luke 12.

Golden Text: Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 6:19–24.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Sin of Drunkenness and Gluttony.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Enslaving Power of Strong Drink.

Lesson Text: Luke 12:16–21, 41–48

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

41 And Peter said, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath.

45 But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful.

47 And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes;*

48 But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Why Was the Rich Man a Fool? Negative Reasons.

2. Positive Reasons.

3. A Faithful Servant.

4. An Unfaithful Servant.

A great concourse of people was gathered before Jesus and he was delivering to them a sermon on some of the fundamental laws of the kingdom. While he was preaching a man in the audience was thinking of something else.

People often are thinking of something else while the preacher is preaching.

Worldly cares and ambitions may thrust themselves into our richest opportunities and finest moods, and earth may crowd out heaven.

This man spoke up and said, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." He had a personal grievance which he wished the preacher to settle, but Jesus declined the task with the sharp rebuke, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" The Saviour was not in the world to settle lawsuits and correct its wrongs in this way. Having dismissed this case Jesus went on with the sermon, only this interruption gave a new turn to his discourse against the sin of covetousness, which was the real root of the trouble between the two brothers. "Take heed," he said, "and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

1. Why Was the Rich Man a Fool? Negative Reasons

This was the occasion and the text of a powerful sermon in the form of a parable. We are shown the picture of a successful farmer whose wealth is growing and his barns are bursting, and he does not know how to store his harvests. He solves the problem by resolving to tear down the old barns and build bigger ones, and then he will rest, eat, drink and have a jolly time.

But God called this man a fool and declared that that very night his soul was required of him; and then his wealth would be scattered by other hands.

The parable fits many a modern business man without a wrinkle.

We see him succeeding in business until he knows not how to invest his accumulating profits. He branches out into many lines of trade and owns large blocks of stocks and bonds and may be a director in more corporations than he can count.

He dreams of days of retirement when he will rest in ease and pleasure;

but these days never come, for amidst his planning and toiling for larger wealth sudden death strikes him, a great funeral is held, the newspapers laud him, the minister eulogizes him, the grave closes over him, the will is read and perhaps is followed with family dissensions, and eventually the estate is divided and scattered.

This man is the envy of others who applaud him for his brilliant success, but this is the man whom God calls a fool.

It is an unexpected and harsh word in the parable, but Jesus always picked his words carefully and meant just what he said.

Why was this man a fool? We may first note some negative reasons.

He was not a fool mentally. He was not born with a crippled or disordered brain or a weak mind, but had keen mental faculties, and his education had not been neglected. He understood his business thoroughly and knew all about markets and prices.

The successful business man of today is invariably a man of intellectual parts and usually has a college education and the best training in his field. He often is the peer of professional men. A great capitalist and captain of modern industry controlling millions of money and world-wide markets must be a man of commanding ability.

The man that succeeds in the keen competition of today is no fool mentally.

And this man was not a fool in moral weakness and viciousness.

He was not a spendthrift or lazy idler or prodigal pleasure seeker, or he never would have gotten rich. He had no open vices and was eminently moral and respectable among men. The successful man in business today is nearly always such a man.

Morality is one of the laws of business and a man must be moral to succeed.

Vice unfits a man for business and will soon put him out of it.

Again, this man was not a fool because he was rich.

The parable is commonly called " the rich fool," but God did not call him a rich fool but simply a fool.

There is nothing wrong in being rich, provided the riches are obtained and used in right ways.

Riches imply ability and industry, so that men of large wealth are likely to be men of uncommon wisdom and productivity rather than men of folly. Wealth honestly gained is an honor to a man as it bears witness to his usefulness and worth, and no man can honestly get rich himself without helping other men to get rich also and thereby adding to the wealth of the world.

This was a man, then, of mental ability and moral character and of honest wealth, and yet notwithstanding all this God called him a fool; and such in the sight of God may be the real standing of many a successful man among us.

2. Positive Reasons

Why, then, was this man a fool?

First, because of his selfishness.

Not knowing what to do with the abundance of his goods, he never thought of them in any other light than a means to his own gratification. He never saw beyond "my barns" and "my goods" into his neighbor's needs. Wealth was never to him a means of social service, but was always and only a means of personal enjoyment.

Such misuse of one's powers and possessions is selfishness and blindness that brand a man as a fool in the sight of God.

Closely related to this as a second element in his folly was his gross materialism.

His only thought of life was to rest, eat, drink and be jolly. He had no higher aspiration than ease and gratification in which every physical appetite was satisfied and satiated. Truth and duty, sympathy and service and sacrifice were visions that never visited his sky. He thought he could feed his soul on corn and was content to exist on a level with the beasts and virtually lived upon husks which his own swine ate. A life in which the spirit is thus sunk in the flesh is a pitiful prostitution of all our high and noble powers, and he that is content to live such a life is a fool indeed.

Deeper still, this man was a fool because he had faith in and fellowship with God.

" So is he that layeth not up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." He was rich in this world's goods and thought that he had need of nothing, but he did not know that he was poor and blind and naked in his soul. He never had found his heavenly Father by faith and entered into a life of fellowship and service with him.

Sin had never seized him with a sense of its guilt and vileness and had never been cleaned out of his heart, and his soul had not been harmonized into peace with God. No heavenly ideal burned above him to coax and woo him on and up to higher things. Life with him was a mere matter of eating and drinking, and death was a leap into the dark. He said in his heart, either explicitly or implicitly, " There is no God," and such a man is a fool.

A selfish, materialistic, godless life, then, constitutes one a fool in the sight of heaven.

Such fools are not rare in our modern world. The wonderful increase of wealth in our day when all our barns are bursting and men are constantly planning larger enterprises and heaping up enormous glittering piles of gold and goods intensifies life on its materialistic side. Covetousness is the master motive of many, and increasing multitudes of men are thinking that life consists in the abundance of the things which they possess. We are thus in danger of groveling in the earth and growing blind to the sky. Such gain overbalanced by such loss is a bad bargain.

What shall it profit us if we thus gain the whole world and then lose our own soul? Though it may make us rich and envied in the sight of men, yet such a life draws upon us the divine judgment, " Thou foolish one! "

3. A Faithful Servant

Jesus now proceeded to speak of the uselessness of anxiety for the life of the body and quoted from the lilies to show how God cares for them and will much more clothe us and introduced a little parable of a lord who went off on his marriage journey and left his servants to watch his business until his return.

Peter asked a question which drew from Jesus the answer, " Who

then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

This shows what true watching for the coming of Christ is.

It is not standing still and straining our vision to catch the first glimpse of our coming Lord. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven?" (Acts 1:11). Watching is not indulging in vain speculations and calculations. It does not allow us to drop work and forsake our post of duty. The last thing a righteous lord would desire would be to find his servants waiting for him in idleness and riotous living.

Our Lord has made us rulers over his household to give them food in due season.

His household is the human family, and every one of us is ruler over some part of this family and in some degree over all of it.

The food we are to give them is the food of care and help, teaching and training, sympathy and service, brotherhood and love. Faithfulness in this work is faithfulness to our Lord. This is what he desires to find us doing when he comes. He is ever coming to us in many ways and will finally come at the last day. Doing his work is our best preparation for his coming in any and every form. We are watching for Christ when we are watching over his children. He is to be seen, not riding in a flaming chariot in the sky, but in the needs and sufferings of our human kind. He is to be found under every burden that we may bear and in every tear that we may brush away.

Watching is working.

Blessed is the servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily his Lord "will set him over all that he hath."

His outer field of service shall be enlarged and his inner capacities shall be developed and his cup of blessing shall be full.

4. An Unfaithful Servant

In dark contrast with this faithful servant stands the unfaithful one. His unfaithfulness begins "in his heart," whence springs all evil. "My lord delayeth his coming," he says to himself. He did not believe his

master would keep his promise and flattered himself the day of reckoning was uncertain and far away.

An evil heart of unbelief is the core and root of all our unfaithfulness.

The commands of conscience and the promises of our Lord do not stand for us as solid unshakable realities.

A doubt creeps into our hearts whether these high principles of the spiritual world are so sure and binding as they are represented to be. We begin to wonder whether we cannot slip from their grasp, at least in secret, and evade their penalties. Anyhow the day of judgment is far off and wrapped in mist if not in myth.

Many a man, balancing these questions in his mind, flings duty to the winds and resolves to take his chance.

The evil servant, having cherished this evil thought in his heart, immediately began to beat his fellowservants and to live riotously. Out of the heart are the issues of life.

Thought leaps into action. Creed creates conduct.

A man's life cannot be right if his thoughts are wrong. If we distrust Christ in our hearts we shall disobey him in our lives. The Lord of the evil servant, though he seems to have forgotten to come, will surely come and call every unfaithful servant to judgment. Justice never forgets though its patience may be long.

A great day of judgment is finally coming, but judgment does not wait until the trumpet blows. It stands at the door of every house, it watches with eternal vigilance over our most secret thoughts.

Every day is a day of judgment and writes its irrevocable verdict in the flames of the setting sun.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is a fool?
2. What are some different kinds of fools?
3. Whom does the Bible declare to be a fool?
4. May a poor man be a fool as truly as a rich man?
5. In what different ways may Christ come to us?
6. How may we best watch for him coming?

LESSON XIII—MARCH 29

Review: Jesus the World's Saviour: Preparation and Popularity

Golden Text: Jesus of Nazareth . . . who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. Acts 10:38.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 35:5–10.

The lessons of the First Quarter have carried us halfway through the Gospel of Luke and more than halfway through the ministry of Jesus and we may now gather them together in a comprehensive view and rapid review.

1. The Birth of John the Baptist

Luke begins his life of Jesus with John, his forerunner, and he begins the life of John with his parents, Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Every life has deep roots and heredity is a tremendous factor in human character.

They were pious people, but a great void was in their life as no child had come to complete their union. An angel visitant announced to the aged priest that his wife would bear a son and his name should be John.

No news was sweeter to Hebrew ears as this brought the fulfilment of their most earnest desire and possibly put them in the Messianic lineage.

The angel proceeded to sketch the character of the coming son. He should be "great," but greatness is of different kinds of worth, and this child should be "great in the sight of the Lord." He also should fulfil a worthy mission in going before his Lord to prepare the way for him.

This greatness, however, had to be slowly attained as "the child grew."

2. The Childhood of Jesus

We usually know little about the childhood of great men, especially of ancient times, and only one or two descriptive verses and one incident tell us all we know of the childhood of Jesus.

But we know he was a true human child and grew up through the normal stages and experiences of human life.

He was human yet he was sinless. He grew in Nazareth in the home and village school and synagogue, taking time and gathering wisdom and strength for his coming work.

At twelve years of age occurred the incident of his going up to Jerusalem to the feast of Passover with his parents. He at once found his way to his "Father's house." The attractions and excitement of the city did not lure him off from his religious life.

His parents found him there hearing the rabbis and asking them questions with such candor and teachability and wisdom as caused astonishment. It was a glad hour with his parents and yet also a sad moment with his mother as she realized that her son was now slipping from her control and exercising his own responsibility.

Back in the home in Nazareth with his parents "he was subject unto them," a wonderful record of him who was the Son of God.

3. The Ministry of John the Baptist

A great revival meeting down in the Jordan valley was the opening of John the Baptist's ministry. He had appeared out of the wilderness where he lived the life of an ascetic and his fearless preaching drew the multitudes from every quarter of the land.

Yet his eccentric dress and manner, long hair and camel's robe, were not the secret of his strange power. Long hair never made a long head.

His power was in his message of repentance uttered with deep and burning conviction.

Repentance is the reaction of the soul against sin, a sense of sin accompanied with an emotion of guilt and desire for forgiveness.

The preacher was not afraid of his congregation and drove his sharp arrows straight into their bosoms.

The people began to cry out, "What then must we do?" Preaching that does not bring conviction, however popular it may be, lacks the vital purpose and point of the gospel. So great grew the popularity of John that the people began to wonder whether he were not the Messiah, but this splendid temptation John quickly put from him.

4. Jesus Tempted

Immediately after his baptism Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the evil, so close are baptism and temptation here crowded together.

> The meaning of the temptation of Jesus was that he had just become fully conscious of his divine endowment and like any sudden acquisition of power, this put a strain upon him as to how he would use it. His temptations were all forms of solicitation to use his divine power for his own comfort and ambition: to get bread when hungry in a quick way and to gain popularity with the people by a sensational leap from the temple so that he would be at once acclaimed as the Messiah.

Jesus saw through these apparently innocent proposals into their black heart as disloyalty to God and the prostitution of his divine sonship to personal and worldly ends. And he slew each one of them with a word from the Scriptures which was his armory and armor.

> By these quotations and by the realities embodied in them he gained the victory and beat the devil back into the darkness whence he came.

5. The Great Physician

In this lesson we are given a picture of a busy Sabbath in the life of Jesus. In the morning he went to church in the synagogue. There he was no passive listener but he took part in the service and healed a demonized man.

> A church that does not stir up and cast out evil spirits has lost its divine commission and power.

Out of the church Jesus went into the home of Simon, and there he did the same kind of work he did in the church, healed Simon's wife's mother of a fever.

> There is a close connection between the church and the home: what we are in the one we are in the other.

However many miles lie between them they touch and melt into each other in their inner spirit. Religion is preached in the church but it is to be lived in the home and everywhere.

In the evening of this day the people brought their sick and filled up the street before the house where Jesus was and he healed them.

His mercy, that in the morning filled the church, in the afternoon flowed into a home and in the evening overflowed into the city and bathed all its sick in its gracious tide.

Jesus then sought retirement and rest in prayer in a desert place, for he could not keep up the pace of such a strenuous day without relief and recuperation. But he could not long be hid and then he announced that he must preach the good news of the kingdom " to the other cities also."

There are many " other cities " in our country and abroad where we must take the gospel.

6. Jesus the World's Teacher

Next we listen to Jesus delivering his sermon on the mount,—a truly mountain sermon overtopping all the messages of the prophets and philosophers of this world.

The Mosaic law required love to one's neighbor, and even went so far as to suggest hatred to one's enemy (Deut. 23:16), but Jesus broadened this command so as to make it include enemies and enjoined his disciples to pray even for active and bitter enemies.

This is a hard grace and calls for a large measure of Christian spirit.

Jesus then gave his golden rule which fell from his lips as one of the most precious treasures of the world's literature. The rule bids us do to others, even enemies, what we would have them in like circumstances do to us. The same rule applies to all social groups, such as employers and employees.

The spirit of mercy is enjoined upon us, for this is the golden rule carried to the extreme limit of its gracious application. Mercy is forbearance from exacting justice and punishment from those who are in the wrong and have fallen into our power and it restrains us from pressing others to the wall.

We are not to judge others in a censorious spirit, for this does them injustice and injury and will bring the same kind and measure of judgment back upon us.

7. Jesus the Friend of Sinners

This lesson presents us with a scene full of human nature and divine grace. Two types of sinners stand sharply revealed in its intense light, and the power of Jesus to save is illustrated.

Simon the Pharisee, the first figure in the scene, exhibited his hard self-righteous spirit, and a fallen woman crept into the feast in Simon's house and exhibited her penitence by anointing the feet of Jesus with a precious ointment. Her tears fell like rain on his feet and she kissed them after the oriental custom.

The Pharisee looked on her act with severe condemnation, as he considered her presence and touch pollution, but Jesus quietly rebuked him in a parable and silenced him.

He then dealt with the woman with utmost delicacy and tenderness as he forgave her grave social sin.

Instantly the guests began to say, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" But Jesus, unmindful of their narrow spirit, bade her go in peace. The soul that came to him stained with sin went away washed clean.

As he saved these lost ones, so can he save all sinners.

8. Jesus Bearing the Good Tidings

A missionary tour of Jesus opens this lesson. It is the beginning of his missionary program and illustrates its methods. He went from town to town preaching the good tidings of the kingdom. His twelve disciples were with him receiving instruction and training for the wider work they were to carry on when he was gone. Certain women also accompanied him, forerunners of the great host that now publish the word.

We next hear Jesus, as he stood on the grassy shore of Galilee, deliver his parable of the sower, so many-sided in its illustration and application of gospel truth.

Wayside paths, stony ground, thorns, and good soil illustrate the different kinds or conditions of human minds and hearts on which the gospel seed fall.

These classes are ever with us in every congregation and Sunday school class.

The application and point of the parable is an admonition to heed how we hear.

Hearing is not mere passive listening, but it is a state of active coöperation with the preacher or teacher by which we hold our minds on the subject and receive and assimilate it into our own thought and life.

9. Jesus Sending Forth Missionaries

Jesus had recently returned from a missionary tour in which he took with him the twelve disciples and some women, but on this occasion seventy disciples were sent out alone.

There comes a time when the scholar must proceed with his studies without the guidance of the teacher and the same principle applies in Christian service.

They were sent out in pairs, for in such work two together can do better than one.

Companionship is a great cheer and help in work and our missionaries are sent out in groups.

They were given personal directions for their work, for the ministry of the preacher and teacher must be conducted in accordance with rules of business order and good sense. Even the matter of their boarding place and their table matters were not beneath the notice and advice of Jesus. They were to heal the sick and this was the principle and beginning of medical missions.

They were to declare and show that "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," and this is our vital mission today.

If they were rejected in any city they were to depart from it, for there comes a point when we can do no more for recalcitrant people and must leave them.

They returned with great joy over the success of their work, and we may have the same encouragement today.

10. The Good Samaritan

The parable of the Good Samaritan was drawn from Jesus by a sinister attack upon him by one of the scribes and is the product of one of the keenest and subtlest of these hostile schemes, even as the pearl is secreted out of the irritation and suffering of the shellfish.

A certain lawyer made trial of Jesus with a question having a good point, for commandments differ in the order of their importance and some necessarily precede others.

Yet the question was vitiated by the fact that it sprang from a wrong motive; yet Jesus, overlooking this, turned the question to a good use.

This led the lawyer on to a second question, " Who is my neighbor? " and this drew from the great Teacher his superb parable. The Jews had narrowed the word " neighbor " so that it never got far away from their kith and kin, but Jesus broadened it so as to take in a man of another race and religion and thereby widened it out over the whole world.

This is the social gospel in its breadth and generosity and saving power.

11. Jesus among Friends and Foes

Two sisters with widely contrasted characters and temperaments are the central figures in this lesson. Martha was active and busy, rattling the dishes in the kitchen in preparation for a great dinner for Jesus, while Mary was meditative and sat in rapt attention at the feet of Jesus as he spoke gracious words. Martha was nettled at the apparent indifference and neglect with which Mary was treating her and presumed to rebuke Jesus himself for the situation.

But Jesus composed the strained relations with a great saying about the good part that cannot be taken away. It takes all kinds of people to make the church and the world.

12. The Use and Abuse of God's Gifts

Why was this rich man a fool? Not because he was rich, but because he thought he could feed his soul on corn and was utterly selfish in his thoughts of " my barns " and " my goods." So is every one who is not rich towards God.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Sketch the life of Jesus so far as it is described in this Quarter.
2. How does Luke's account of Jesus differ from that of the other gospels?
3. What were Luke's special qualifications for writing a life of Jesus?
4. Would Jesus be as popular if he appeared today?

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUARTER

The Second Quarter continues the First Quarter in the study of Luke's Gospel and may be taken as covering the latter half of the ministry of Jesus.

A brief preview will set before us points in the course we are to follow and interest us in the whole scene before we take up its special parts.

We first see Jesus teaching humility, and no lesson is more needed in our assertive and proud American life and spirit. The parable of the Prodigal Son is one of the masterpieces in this kind of teaching and literature and sweeps the whole circle of redemption from the fall to the final restoration of man. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus sets its scenes on the stages of two worlds and presents vivid contrasts of warning and guidance. We are then taught How to Pray, and we need to be taught how to do this. Jesus saves Zacchæus in dramatic fashion that may be repeated in our day. The parable of the Pounds throws light upon our gifts and possessions and how to use them with a warning against misusing them. Jesus then begins the last week of his ministry in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an acted parable illustrating his broader entry into the world. We are then taken into the upper room in Jerusalem where Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper, so precious in memory and rich in ideas. The Garden of Gethsemane permits us to witness the mysterious sorrow of Jesus as he bore the weight and won the victory of the cross. The crucifixion followed and we look upon that tragic scene and redemptive death. The light of the resurrection morning breaks the darkness of the tomb of Jesus and he meets with his bewildered and sceptical and scoffing disciples and turns their doubt into masterful faith and might. The lessons close with Paul's discussion of how to use or restrain our liberty so as not to injure others who may be weaker in understanding or conscience than ourselves.

These form an attractive program set with stars that should lure us on and lift us up towards these heights of knowledge and experience. May we so study them as to reproduce them in our lives.

SECOND QUARTER

JESUS THE WORLD'S SAVIOUR

STUDIES IN LUKE

(Second Half of a Six-months' Course)

LESSON I—APRIL 5

Jesus Teaches Humility

Lesson: Luke 13:1–14:35; 18:15–17.

Golden Text: Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 14:11.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 2:1–11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Giving Others the Preference.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Spiritual Democracy.

Or, Easter Lesson: The Resurrection

Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:1–8, 50–58.

Golden Text: Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. 1 Corinthians 15:20.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Gospel of the Resurrection.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Proof and Power of the Resurrection.

Lesson Text: Luke 14:7–14; 18:15–17

7 And he spake a parable unto those that were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief seats; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat; lest haply a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him,

9 And he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in the presence of all that sit at meat with thee.

11 For everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

12 And he said to him also that had bidden him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends,

nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 And thou shalt be blessed; because they have not *wherewith* to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

15 And they were bringing unto him also their babes, that he should touch them: but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called them unto him, saying, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *A Fashionable Dinner Party.*
2. *Offended Pharisees.*
3. *A Point in Table Manners.*
4. *The Proper Expenditure of Wealth.*
5. *A Beautiful Scene.*

Here we see Jesus in society. There is no recorded instance in which he declined an invitation to a feast, in which respect he stands in extreme contrast with John the Baptist who never accepted one.

But Jesus was a man among men and moved in all circles and currents of human life.

We find him at a wedding feast and at a fashionable dinner party as well as at a funeral and in a chamber of sickness. He did not stand aloof from his human kind at any point, but he mingled with them and touched them in all their relations.

The Christian is not to be a recluse and an ascetic, but is to associate freely with his fellow men.

Society, even fashionable society, is not forbidden to him: all pure places and pleasures are his. The banqueting hall is open to him as well as the house of prayer and of mourning.

Society in the days of Jesus displayed many of the traits and vices that we see in our modern society: it was ostentatious, insincere and selfish. The fine grace of hospitality was degraded into a means of vulgar display.

Jesus moved through this tainted atmosphere and kept himself unspotted. Its evil spirit no more infected him than the murky air soils the sunbeam that slips through it. He was in it but not of it.

1. A Fashionable Dinner Party

It was a leading Pharisee that was giving this social function. Pharisees were the most bitter enemies of Jesus, yet some of them were disposed to be fair with him, and on more than one occasion he dined with them.

The motives of the host and guests at this feast were not above suspicion, for " they were watching him."

Even their hospitality was not a pure and wholesome atmosphere, full of sunshine and good will, but was tainted and poisonous.

It was the Sabbath, and the manner of observing this day was a great matter with these sticklers for petty points. They were watching to see how he would behave himself on this day in the hope that they might find some ground of accusation against him.

There was present at the feast a man who had the dropsy. Just how he came to be there does not appear. It almost looks as though the presence of this man had been arranged by the Pharisees as a part of their plot: they were not above such things. It may have been, however, and we may charitably suppose that he had strayed into the feast himself, possibly knowing that Jesus was there and hoping for healing from him. The free access to such places in the East would permit this.

However exclusive others may be, Jesus is always accessible, even at a fashionable dinner party.

2. Offended Pharisees

Among all that distinguished and fashionable company, it did not take Jesus long to pick out that dropsical man. His infirmity drew his sympathetic gaze and crowded out of his mind all the attractions of the feast. The Pharisees were quick to note his interest in the afflicted man and thought their hour was come: they knew his disposition to heal the sick and hoped he would now fall into their hands.

Jesus caught their sinister look and proceeded cautiously. Before acting, he submitted the case to their own judgment, a method he often

followed: " Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" So tightly had they spun their narrow and stifling constrictions around this day, so utterly had they missed its meaning and perverted its spirit, that they had come to deny the right of healing during its hours. They thought it the proper thing on this day to hold a feast at which they gave full play to their vanity and selfishness, but they were shocked and scandalized at the thought that during its hours a fellow man should be relieved of the heavy burden of a hopeless infirmity. Nevertheless, when Jesus put the case before them, they held their peace.

His question seems to have made them ashamed of their own heartless creed and practice; the dignity of his person, the benevolence that beamed from his face, awed and silenced them.

Then Jesus " took him, and healed him, and let him go."

The work of healing being done, Jesus continued his argument with the Pharisees. If any one of them had an ass or an ox fallen into a well, would he not pull it out on the Sabbath? The peculiar Pharisaic ethics of the Sabbath permitted such help being given a beast, which had some commercial value, but denied it to a fellow man. The inconsistency and inhumanity of their position seem to have penetrated even their dull minds and deadened consciences, and again they were silent.

Thus Jesus brushed away these Pharisaic restrictions that crushed all the sweetness and light, healing and health out of the day, and restored it to its freedom and joy.

The ordinances of religion are appointed for the good of men and when rightly used are full of blessing.

Yet their power for good is equaled by their power for evil when they are emptied of their meaning and mercy and turned into hard and harsh formalities.

Nothing is more heartless than religion when it loses heart and becomes a mere matter of the head.

3. A Point in Table Manners

The next incident that occurred at this dinner party related to a point in table manners. Jesus, who had not failed to see the physical infirmity of the dropsical man, was equally quick to note the moral

infirmities of the guests. He observed how eager they were to choose and seize the chief seats at the table.

The conceit and presumption of the Pharisees and scribes on matters of etiquette were intolerable. They were punctilious and imperious on points of their own preferment and with shameless effrontery would push themselves into the foremost places.

We are told that "at a banquet of King Jannæus, Rabbi Simon ben Shetach, in spite of the presence of some great Persian satraps, had thrust himself between the king and queen, and when rebuked for his intrusion quoted, in his defense, Ecclesiasticus 15:5: 'Exalt wisdom, and she shall make thee sit among princes.'"

This uncivil and selfish strife was going on before the eyes of Jesus, and he courteously rebuked it. He softened his censure into a parable in which he told the guests that even at a wedding feast, much less therefore at an ordinary dinner party, they should not rush for the chief seats, lest they suffer the humiliation of being shown a lower place; but they should sit down in the lowest seat and then they would receive the honor of being invited to go up higher. He then framed his advice into the great principle that "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The root of sin is selfishness, and Jesus detected this root blossoming out in the way guests took their seats at a dinner table.

Leaves draw their sap from the heart of the tree and reveal its inmost nature, and our table manners and our talk, even every idle word we speak, come from the heart and show what we are.

The discourtesy that leads one to be forward and rude in seizing a coveted seat at a table or in a street car or railway train is a leaf of that poisonous root of evil that caused the Son of God to come into the world and be crucified on the cross. Jesus came to redeem our whole life down to its minutest detail, so that whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do we shall glorify him.

The Christian has no right to be ill-bred and selfish in manners, but should at all times and places wear the beautiful adornment of a considerate and courteous spirit.

There is a principle of compensation at work in the world that sooner or later puts every one in his proper place. Those who rush for and crowd into the chief places generally in time fall to their own level; and those

who are modest and humble and take lowly seats have their worth found out and are invited to go up higher.

We should take the place assigned us and do our best work there, and our faithfulness will not be unobserved and forgotten, but will receive its due reward; not that we are sure to receive a higher official position or larger salary or grow rich, but that we shall have our worth appreciated and reap the inner reward of faithful service.

4. The Proper Expenditure of Wealth

A third matter that came up at this feast related to the proper expenditure of wealth. The Jews were in the habit of making these Sabbath dinners costly affairs in which the main motives were display and vanity and the effort to score a social triumph; and only those were invited who were of such wealth and social standing as could be expected to return the compliment with an invitation that would be still more lavish in its luxury.

Jesus noted this selfish spirit and laid down a different principle.

He advised against inviting friends and kinsmen and rich neighbors and made a plea for showing hospitality to the poor and afflicted, promising that such a spirit would bring blessing and be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

Of course he would not be understood as discountenancing the exchange of pleasant hospitalities among friends and neighbors, but only as condemning an exclusive selfish spirit and favoring such use of one's wealth as would share its blessing with the poor and needy.

As usual in the teaching of Jesus this apparently trivial point involved a great principle.

These Pharisees regarded their wealth as a means for their personal gratification and never as a means of social service. This is a dangerous fallacy that poisons the possession of wealth at the root. Money should be spent even in personal satisfaction only in such ways as will contribute to the general good of society, and he who by his wealth entices or compels many people into making useless and harmful luxuries for himself is thereby helping to impoverish the world.

John Stuart Mill and Ruskin, the one a scientific and the other a

moral economist and philanthropist, both severely condemn the expenditure of wealth that is social waste. All wealth, however it may be privately owned, is in a degree a public trust, and should be used only in such ways as will promote public good.

This is a true principle that our multimillionaires and rich people should understand and practice, as many of them do, or their wealth will breed unrest and corruption and anarchy and ruin.

There can be no doubt that the ostentatious and foolish expenditure and display of wealth on the part of very rich people has produced a vast amount of popular prejudice against wealth and wealthy classes, and this is a dangerous explosive in our modern society.

Thus Jesus invited out to a dinner party took his religion with him and there applied it to the three great ends of healing an afflicted man, of teaching humility and good manners in all the relations of life, and of setting forth the true principle of expending wealth; and there are no lessons that our modern world more needs today.

5. A Beautiful Scene

A later incident in the life of Jesus closes our lesson with a beautiful scene. On one occasion parents brought their children unto Jesus that he might touch and bless them. But the disciples, big burly fishermen with little sympathy with children, thought these parents were bothering Jesus with their babies and made known their displeasure and wanted them to take the pestiferous things away.

But Jesus took a different view of the situation.

He saw an opportunity to show his interest in and sense of the worth of children and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God." He even went further and said, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." It was a great day in the church and for the world when Jesus uttered these immortal words.

A man and especially a great man may be safely judged by his estimate and treatment of children and by this test Jesus is above all.

Dear little child! Jesus made thee the center and symbol of his kingdom! Where now are the intellectual, the learned, the brilliant geniuses, the men of mighty brain and mind? They vanish from the presence of the child!

Jesus set the child in the midst and that is where we should set it in the home and in the church and in society and in the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. When in society how may we protest against its unchristian ways?
2. Do table manners indicate one's character?
3. What are the marks of a well-bred person?
4. Are we as much responsible for how we spend as for how we get our money?
5. Why is a child so important?

LESSON II—APRIL 12

The Prodigal Son

Lesson: Luke 15.

Golden Text: There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke 15:10.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 55:1, 2, 6–11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Father's Welcome to the Wandering Son.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Church and the Repentant Sinner.

Lesson Text: Luke 15:11–24

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of *thy* substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight:

19 I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring the fatted calf, *and* kill it, and let us eat, and make merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

1. Alienation.

2. Degeneration.

3. Degradation.

4. Reflection.
5. Resolution.
6. Reconciliation.

The Prodigal Son is the most beautiful and precious parable uttered by Jesus.

It is a masterpiece of picturesque and dramatic description, depicting human life in its many-colored aspects, revealing the interior play of its movements and motives and portraying the vital workings of sin and salvation.

It sweeps the whole circle of theology, starting with man unfallen in his Father's house, tracing his fall through alienation and degeneration down into degradation, and in his return through reflection and resolution to reconciliation, when he was once more a son in his Father's home, and the circle was complete. The whole parable is not simply ancient history, but is a vivid picture of the most modern conditions.

1. Alienation

We first witness a scene of alienation. Two sons are enjoying their father's protection and love in the home. The father was equally the father of both sons, though one remained loyal and the other rebelled against him and went out and wandered far. His fatherhood both antedated and outlasted his unfaithful son's rebellion, and he was still the father of the prodigal in his deepest degradation.

This is the point and purpose of the parable.

God is the Father of all men, of the wickedest sinners as well as of the purest saints. His Fatherhood is rooted back of redemption and back of the fall and had its origin when he said, "Let us make man in our image"; and it survives through all human sinfulness. The father with his sons in the home pictures the ideal relation between God and his human children; a relation of care on the one side and of obedience on the other, the whole relation being suffused with love and joy.

Into this happy home crept a devil.

The younger son asked the father for his portion of the property. He made no complaint against his father, he alleged no grievance, but

some fatal thought had come into his heart of wider liberty and a better time elsewhere.

The home then seemed narrow and unattractive, and the world looked free and rosy and sin tasted sweet.

So the foolish boy grew alienated from his father and asked for a division of the property and a separation. Sin starts in wrong thoughts of God, of his law and life, and thinks it can find a better way.

The father divided his property and gave the dissatisfied son his portion, for he could not have kept him as a loyal son in the home by force.

God, having created us free moral beings, has endowed us with a degree of sovereignty which he cannot infringe upon and he must let us do as we will within limits. Our substance, character and destiny are committed into our own hands.

We can leave God and go away from him if we will.

2. Degeneration

Events moved swiftly, and we next witness a scene of rapid degeneration. Not many days afterward, the infatuated youth gathered all his possessions together and made off into a far country.

Thought leaped into action, doubt started towards damnation.

It is a terrible mistake to suppose that we can cherish evil thoughts in our hearts and not do evil deeds. If we doubt God we shall soon be on our way to the devil.

He "gathered all together," for when a man starts on the road of sin he takes all he has with him, property, habits, character and soul. Many a man flatters himself that he will take into the devil's country only one little portion of his substance, such as a single secret appetite, and he will keep the rest safe in the land of good reputation.

But in reality all that he has goes with him and at last shares in his degradation.

He went into a far country where he thought he would be free from all restrictions and could have the best possible time doing as he pleased.

The fatal thought is ever being whispered into our ears that the farther we can get from God and the freer we are from his laws, the more liberty and life we shall enjoy.

In that far land he wasted his substance in riotous living. Life became a round of revelry and a whirl of pleasure in which his money was soon spent.

Sin wastes substance.

It never creates but only destroys. It wastes property, money and time. Vice is expensive, and the devil presents big bills. It wastes business energy and skill. It wastes the body, poisons its blood, burns up its tissues, and rots its bones.

It cuts deeper and slashes into character, deadens conscience and destroys the soul bit by bit.

Righteous living increases substance, but riotous living wastes it and leaves a man a financial, physical and moral bankrupt.

This truth is no invention of the priest and church; it is not taught in the Bible only: it is a law of life and is taught just as plainly and as solemnly in the daily newspaper; one may see a dozen glaring instances and proofs of it in any morning or evening journal, though he reads no more than the headlines.

3. Degradation

Next we witness a scene of degradation. The prodigal had a good time while he moved through a many-colored maze of pleasure, but all the while he was swiftly sliding down and soon reached the bottom. "When he had spent all" was the signal of the end.

Vice rapidly runs through all that a man has.

It has an insatiate greed that eats up the last dollar and the last atom of good. Then comes famine, and want begins to cry out in distress. It is the blindness of sin that it never looks ahead and considers the end thereof until it is reduced to beggary and its doom is upon it.

The prodigal was forced to do something for a bare living, and he entered into the service of a citizen of the country who sent him into his fields to feed swine. This was abhorrent work to a Jew and pictures the extreme degradation and slavery to which sin reduces its victims.

The sinful pleasures that are at first sweet liberty at last become vile bondage.

Wreathes of roses are transformed into coils of serpents.

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us."

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat."

This marks the lowest point of his degradation.

He lived with pigs and was in no better condition than they; in some respects he was worse off. Sin sinks the spirit in the flesh and reduces a man to a beast. It turns the world into a pigsty and sends the soul to a swine-trough. While his money lasted the prodigal had plenty of friends and all sorts of people scraped acquaintance with him and were profuse in their flatteries, but now "no man gave unto him." Everybody cut his acquaintance, and nobody would so much as recognize him or give him a crumb of bread.

Friendship cemented by sin will not hold together.

Evil companions at length turn against one another and have no truth or honor or mercy among themselves. Sin is anti-social in its nature and work and severs all friendly ties and reduces the evil doer to a terrible isolation in which no man cares for him.

All this descent from the comfort and joy of the home down through alienation and degeneration into degradation is not ancient history, but is modern experience and is a story told every day in our newspapers.

4. Reflection

We have now reached the turning-point in the prodigal's career, and it is marked by reflection. "When he came to himself" is the expressive phrase that introduces the change. The words imply that he had been away from himself, out of his right mind. The phrase is more than a figure of speech and tells the simple truth.

Sin is insanity.

It puts one out of his right mind so that he sees all things in wrong proportions and relations. It perverts the judgment and throws the

brain out of gear with the world. This was the state of mind of the prodigal son in his downward course from his father's house to the pigsty. When he started out an alluring scene lay before him and he saw all things in false lights and colors. Life was to be a continual round of revelry and he saw no wrong in it and secretly laughed at his father's Pharisaic views. His father with his old-fashioned, straight-laced notions and ways stood in his pathway, and he did not need the old man any more!

But now this evil life had wholly changed, and the rosy hues that his imagination threw around it have all faded away and he sees its sombre shades and guilty features.

He is no longer blinded to its wrongs and ruinous nature, but he sees its sin; and his soul is shocked and recoils from it as from a dreadful thing.

Reflection has brought him to his senses and restored his sanity.

Famine and want have led him to consider, or look starward, as the word means. The swine husks were a continual suggestion and reminder of his father's house and the plenty that was there. So he has got back out of that false world, which his sinful imagination had pictured, into the real world.

His thoughts now correspond with things; his mind fits the facts; and he has so far come to his true self, he is a sane man.

Reflection is always the first step in repentance, and there is always hope for a man that will stop and consider and thus come to his true and sane self.

5. Resolution

Reflection now ripens into resolution. "I will arise and go to my father" was the determination that grew up in his heart. The root of this resolution was the sovereign "I will."

His will had taken him away from his father and now his will must take him back.

His father could not prevent his departure and his father could not force his return. God can throw many influences around us to draw us back to himself, but he cannot force us back and we never shall return until our own soul gathers itself into a determination to arise and go to him.

The prodigal's resolution grew along the three lines of faith, penitence, and obedience.

"I will go to my father" was his faith.

He still recognized his father as his father and had confidence in him. He believed in his father and was willing to trust him, and this was faith. Faith is the first condition of approach to God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

"I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight" was his penitence.

He did not come back declaring he had done no wrong and demanding all his former rights, but confessing himself unworthy to be called a son.

"Make me as one of thy hired servants" was his obedience.

He did not ask for abundance and ease, but for service and for any work however hard and menial it might be.

Such faith and penitence and obedience are always the path that leads the sinner's feet out of his degradation straight back to his Father's house.

6. Reconciliation

The final scene is one of reconciliation. The heartbroken father had never forgotten that wandering boy. Through all the years he had hoped and waited for his return. The prodigal was approaching the old home with a trembling heart, wondering how he would be received, whether he would be admitted at all or ruthlessly turned away and told to take himself off.

But the father was watching for him and caught the first glimpse of him while he was yet a great way off, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

The son could not finish his penitent speech before the father had ordered out the best robe and a ring for his finger and the fatted calf for a feast, and presently the old homestead, that had so long mourned a wandering lost son, gleamed with lights and resounded with the music of minstrelsy and dance.

Once more the broken home was restored and redemption was complete.

So waits the Father for the return of his human children and such is the reception they receive. The Father will never be satisfied and we shall never be saved until we are in his everlasting arm.

"And they began to be merry."

This is the final outcome of salvation. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are children dissatisfied with their home life?
2. What temptations do young people run into when they leave home?
3. Describe some of the consequences of sin.
4. How can young people be drawn back to their homes?
5. What are the joys of right relations with God and right living?

LESSON III—APRIL 19

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Lesson: Luke 16:1–17:37.

Golden Text: Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. Matthew 6:20.

Devotional Reading: 1 John 3:13–18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Curse of Selfishness.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Right and Wrong Uses of Wealth.

Lesson Text: Luke 16:19–31

19 Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day:

20 And a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the *crumbs* that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried.

23 And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.

27 And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house;

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Contrasted Lives.***
2. ***Contrasted Funerals.***
3. ***The Veil of Time Parted.***
4. ***A Remarkable Conversation.***
5. ***A Sufficient Revelation.***

This is another great parable that was occasioned by the scoffs of the Pharisees. Many of the most beautiful things in the world grow out of ugly conditions, as the pearl is produced by the irritation and suffering of the shellfish, and some of Christ's finest parables were called forth by the jeers and stings of enemies.

In the parable of the Unjust Steward he had just thrown light on the right use of money. "And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, scoffed at him."

This drew from Jesus another parable in which the results of a worldly life are depicted in startling colors in comparison with a life of piety.

On the mighty stage of this parable are set scenes in two worlds, in each of which the extremes of character and condition are disclosed to view. In this world we see two men in the widest contrast: a rich man in luxury and a beggar in rags lying helpless at his gate.

The scene now suddenly shifts to the other world and we see these same two men in reversed positions: the earthly beggar is enjoying heavenly felicity and the worldly rich man is suffering torment.

The parable thus moves along two lines that cross and cut each other at the middle point. Along the one path from the highest point of temporal enjoyment the rich man descends into endless misery; and along the other path from the lowest point of earthly wretchedness the beggar ascends to the heights of heavenly bliss. The common point where these lives intersect is death, which lies on the boundary between time and eternity. The two paths in this world converge towards this point, for here all men meet together. Beyond this point in the other world the two paths diverge until a broad and fixed gulf separates them forever.

The parable is timeless in its essential teaching and fits our modern world as well as it fitted the world in the days of Jesus. It is a vivid and startling exhibition of the psychological and social and spiritual laws that work out the penalties of selfishness and the rewards of righteousness.

1. Contrasted Lives

First, we see the rich man and the beggar, Dives and Lazarus. Dives lives in a palace with an outer gate that secludes him and makes access to him difficult. He is clothed in the rarest and costliest materials; his

outer robes are of royal purple and his inner garments of pure white linen, worth its weight in gold. Richest viands are his ordinary fare. Everything that appetite can crave, imagination can fancy, art can minister and gold can buy, is supplied. The whole world is ransacked to gratify this man.

This brief verse, so materialistic in its tone, that simply reflects the splendor of his worldly life, is his whole biography.

There is no word or hint of service to his fellow men, of charity to the needy, of worship to God. Nothing is said of these because there is nothing to say. This man, though guilty of no flagrant wickedness, has set his heart on this world. His sin is, not that he is rich, but that he uses his riches in luxurious and elegant but none the less socially injurious and cruel selfishness.

Hard by this picture lies another of very different aspect.

Outside the rich man's gate the beggar is laid, in the hope it may be at least to get some crumbs from the palace table. No hand is seen ministering to him, no word of kindness is heard, only dogs come and express their mute sympathy by licking his sores.

But this is not his whole biography, for, unlike the rich man, the beggar has a name which contains a world of meaning.

Jesus calls him Lazarus, which means "God is my help." The name is meant to be significant and through it there shines the light of a godly character. Beneath his poverty we find piety. Though poor in the bread of earth, he is yet rich in the bread of heaven.

Such are the two lives, showing that inner character and outer condition do not always match. There is no necessary sin in riches, and no inherent virtue in poverty. Wealth is not always connected with wickedness, and we may easily have the beggar's earthly rags without having his heavenly riches.

Purple robes may conceal moral ugliness, and through clean rags may shine the beauty of a pure heart.

2. Contrasted Funerals

And now these two brief but significant biographies are brought to a close. It is said of each, as sooner or later it will be said of every one,

that he "died." The rich man's gold could not bribe the great enemy, nor could the beggar's sufferings excite his pity.

There is, however, a difference in the manner of their deaths.

Of the one it is simply said that "the beggar died." No mention is made of any funeral rites. "It came to pass," it happened one morning that his dead body was found outside the palace gate and was hurried off to a pauper's grave. The world moved on unconscious of this death.

But the rich man "also died, and was buried." A great funeral was held. The body was wrapped in a costly shroud, mourners were hired to weep and wail, a priest came in his flowing robes and with his prayer book and spoke flattering words of the deceased man's success in business and high standing in the city, and a long procession wound through the streets. The whole community was in commotion over this death.

Thus each man's death was in fit accord with his life.

The beggar's life was so little involved in the affairs of earth that his departure was unnoticed, but the rich man had struck his roots so deep and wide into the world that he drew it after him to his grave.

The narratives of these different deaths also led to different destinations.

The beggar "was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom." People knew where he had gone; his piety was the prophecy of his destiny. But of the rich man it is simply that "he was buried," and there the record stops. No one knew where he had gone, or, suspecting it, did not wish to venture a guess, and the priest at the funeral had overlooked this point and maintained a discreet and impressive silence about it.

So closes the record for this world. In these two pictures of the rich man and the beggar we may see our images reflected according as we possess the worldly spirit of the one, or the pious spirit of the other.

Our lives are here put under a magnifying glass that we may see what manner of persons we are.

3. The Veil of Time Parted

The parable now parts the veil of time and discloses the vast theater of eternity. Dives and Lazarus are dead, but death does not end all, and when we get a glimpse into the other world we find them there.

The scene that opens before us is in startling contrast with the earthly scene.

Beggar and rich man are now in reversed positions, the one in Abraham's bosom and the other in Hades in torment. Their outer circumstances have been torn off, as husks off corn or masks off faces, revealing their true inner character and each has gone to his own place. In this world the rich man's selfishness and sin were concealed under his purple and fine linen, and the beggar's virtues were hidden under his rags; but now the rich man is stripped naked and thrust among liars and thieves, while the beggar is clothed in the beauty of holiness and is in the company of just men made perfect.

Here we behold the enigmas and riddles of providence unraveled.

On earth the selfish man of sin was feasted and flattered, and the poor and pious man was despised and trodden under foot; but on the other side of the veil these inequalities and injustices are leveled up and redressed, each receiving his due reward.

Here we see whither these two lives on earth were tending.

In this world they ran side by side; the beggar lay at the rich man's gate. But though apparently near together, they were yet running in different directions and are now separated by a great and fixed gulf Two rays issue from a point of light apparently parallel, but they are diverging beams and at length will be separated by the distance of the stars. Our lives may run side by side in this world, but if there is a difference, however slight, in their moral direction, we shall at last be separated by the great gulf that lies between heaven and hell.

There are diverging lines out of this world into the next, and if we would all go to the same place we must all get upon the same line.

4. A Remarkable Conversation

A remarkable conversation is now recorded, which need not be taken as a literal representation but only as the necessary parabolic staging of the scene. Dives, no longer called the " rich man," but only " he," makes a request. He scrapes acquaintance with Abraham by addressing him as " Father," and asks that Lazarus be sent to cool his tongue with one drop of water. The appetite that he had pampered on earth had followed him and was now his punishment.

His tongue that had fastidiously ministered to his delight was now his torture.

This request throws a searchlight upon Dives and reveals him as being essentially the same man, unchanged in character and conduct. He shows no sign of penitence for his sin, and he still regards Lazarus as his servant.

This refutes the theory that punishment is necessarily remedial and will surely work the penitence and restoration of the lost. Death does not change the heart, and a man's sins do not die with his body.

Abraham, while addressing him as "son," could only fasten on him his righteous doom. He first drove into his soul the sting of memory. "Son, remember!" God need not kindle physical flames for the lost: memory will forever burn.

The request was unreasonable because in his earthly life he had received the good things he had chosen, and finally it was impossible because a great impassible gulf now separated them.

This gulf is crystallized character which hardens into final permanence. These are solemn words of warning and they cannot be erased from the Word of God.

5. A Sufficient Revelation

The lost man, silenced on one point, now raises another. He would have Lazarus sent to his five brethren.

The root of this request appears to be an indirect subtle attempt at self-justification.

The implication is that he himself had not had a clear and sufficient warning which he now desires his brethren to have. Abraham reminded him that they had Moses and the prophets. But he replied that these were not enough, yet if one were sent from the dead they would believe and repent. He thus boldly charged that these prophets were not sufficient and demanded further testimony for his brethren.

Herein is disclosed the cause of his own destruction, which is the point of the parable. He had himself rejected Moses and set his heart on selfish indulgence. Practical unbelief had destroyed him.

But though he was not willing to trust his brothers to Moses, yet he was willing to stake their eternal welfare on the word of a ghost! It is frequently the case that those who are readiest to reject inspired truth are quickest to believe in ghostly visitors and spirit communications!

Scepticism often runs straight to superstition.

Abraham refused the request with the declaration. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead."

A sinful generation still seeks after a sign. Why does not some spirit come to us and assure us of the truth of the eternal world? Because such testimony would be futile, and we now have a more sure word of prophecy. It is not more evidence we need, but more willingness to believe the evidence we have; not better instructed minds but a changed heart. The mere visitation of a ghost could not convert us. It is not spirits we need, but Spirit.

God hath spoken to us through Moses and in these last days through his Son who rose again from the dead: if we hear not these, neither would we be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What modern social problem is reflected in the pictures of Dives and Lazarus?
2. Are conditions of wealth and poverty the main matters in our lives?
3. In what ways may the selfishness of Dives be lurking in us?
4. How may we live "after the power of an endless life?" (Heb. 7:16).
5. Are "spirit communications" from the other world desirable?
6. In what ways are Moses and the prophets sufficient for us?

LESSON IV—APRIL 26

How to Pray

Lesson: Luke 18.

Golden Text: Lord, teach us to pray. Luke 11:1.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 61.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What Is True Prayer?

Topic for Young People and Adults: Why Pray?

Lesson Text: Luke 18:1–14

1 And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man:

3 And there was a widow in that city, and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and *yet* he is long-suffering over them?

8 I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

9 And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get.

13 But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.

14 I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Unjust Judge.***
2. ***The Pharisee's Proud Prayer.***
3. ***The Publican's Humble Prayer.***
4. ***The Judgment of Jesus.***

"Men ought always to pray," is the text of this discourse on prayer.

In some sense men always do pray, for the prayer instinct is a constituent element of human nature and is ever struggling for expression.

It may be repressed and thwarted in individual cases, but its deep root abides and grows with the growth of humanity.

Prayer fills a large space in the preaching and practice of Jesus. It is a faculty and privilege and power that needs to be cultivated.

The parable of the Unjust Judge illustrates the power of importunate prayer, and the parable of the Pharisee and Publican throws light upon its inner spirit.

1. The Unjust Judge

The first parable is a true Oriental picture: that of a judge godless and unscrupulous, defying the divine commands and human opinion, amenable to no law but his own arbitrary will, caring for nothing but his own interests and comfort, utterly selfish and corrupt; and a poor widow, with no money to bribe or influence to gain favor, yet being hard pressed and oppressed by some heartless creditor or other enemy.

How can this widow reach the ear of the judge and get some kind of redress? Bribery or threats are the common ways of effecting such ends in the East, but this poor and frail widow could have no hope of such means. What could she do? She could persist in her coming to the judge and thrust herself upon him every day; she could weary and worry and annoy and pester him by her indomitable pertinacity until he would be tired and sick of her. As a wee mite of an insect can sting and irritate and harry the greatest beast and drive it to madness, so would she bother and vex and plague that lazy, corrupt judge until he would be glad to do anything to get rid of her. Day after day she would push her way through the crowd to his side with her noisy complaint and lamentation until he would attend to her case in sheer desperation simply to hush her clamant and raucous tongue.

Her importunity at length gained her point.

He said within himself that though he didn't care a thing for either God or man, yet he would stop that woman's tongue lest she wear him out, or "give me a black eye" as the word means. "And shall not God

avenge his own elect, that cry unto him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them?"

What is the point of the comparison? That God is like an unjust judge in his refusal and delay in hearing petitions?

Of course not. But the point is that importunity has power with him as it has with men.

God is very human, we may say, and is subject to the same motives that influence us. Importunity is an indication of the righteousness of one's cause and of the assured conviction of his heart that he will win his case if he can only get a hearing. It is an evidence of sincerity and of an earnest resolution that will persist until an answer is granted.

Such importunity has power with God because it is a state of receptivity that is one condition of answered prayer.

It does not mean that we are going to tease and plague God until he hears us to get rid of us, but that we are going to plead with him for his blessing until our sincerity and deep earnestness appeal to him.

Such importunity is often necessary in prayer, not for God's sake but for our sake: it is the condition which fits us for the blessing and draws it down upon us.

2. The Pharisee's Proud Prayer

The second parable is directly addressed "unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought."

The very essence of Pharisaism is distilled into these expressive words.

Trusting in self leads to self-righteousness and this leads to despising others, and such a spirit in the heart is fatal to true prayer. We are often astonished at the boldness and merciless truth with which Jesus attacked the Pharisees, the leading churchmen and doctors of divinity of his day, and on this occasion he publicly impaled them on the sharp point of this parable.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray." Outwardly these two men were alike: both went to the same place and for the same ostensible purpose; yet inwardly they were poles apart. No conspicuous difference may distinguish the crowds of people that stream into the same church and sit in the same pews; to the human eye they all alike seem to be

worshipers, yet to the divine eye that pierces through all outer trappings into the heart and care of each one, they may differ as widely as this Pharisee and this publican.

The Pharisee is first etched before us in a picture in which every stroke tells.

He "stood," placed himself ostentatiously and struck an attitude, while another word is used to describe the standing of the publican.

Inner spirit inevitably betrays itself in outer manner.

The attitude is unessential in prayer, though a reverent spirit will always express itself in appropriate forms, but if the heart is wrong no attitude will be right.

The Pharisee "prayed with himself."

His prayer was really a soliloquy.

While professing to be thanking God he was actually congratulating himself; his prayer was spun around and out of the center of his own soul and he never got out of himself. Self-consciousness is a fault and vice that frequently spoils our life and especially our prayers. The minister while making "an eloquent prayer" may really be addressing his congregation, and his petitions in some instances may even be personal allusions paying flattering compliments to or begging favors from rich parishioners, or may even be sharp and poisoned arrows of petty spite aimed at particular enemies. The father may be lecturing his children at family prayers, and thus there are ways in which we can turn our prayers from God and direct them to men for personal purposes.

The Pharisee thanked God.

This is a right point at which to start our prayers, for until we appreciate God's goodness in giving us what we have we are not worthy to receive more.

Yet the virtue of our thankfulness depends on the spirit in which it is given.

The Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men, and rolled off a long catalogue of sinners against the dark background of which his own virtues shone out in splendid contrast. As he completed his

list his eye fell on the publican, and nothing else could have proved such a perfect consummation of his self-satisfaction and pride as with haughty scorn he uttered the words, "or even this publican."

There is a sense in which we may be thankful we are not as other men are when we realize our mercies and are smitten with a sense of unworthiness and humility. When we compare our own condition in the world with many others we cannot help but be thankful God has spared us many things that others must bear.

But the Pharisee's self-righteous boasting and proud sense of superiority over others are an abomination to God and to man.

Comparisons are generally odious, and most offensively so when they exalt ourselves over others. Thus the Pharisee perverted his very prayer unto God to an exhibition of his sinful pride and to the meanness and degradation of his own soul.

So may we turn our prayer into pride and hypocrisy and every manner of wickedness, and if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!

3. The Publican's Humble Prayer

In marked contrast at every point with the Pharisee stands the publican. Being a publican or tax collector, it is to be presumed that he was guilty of the unjust and fraudulent practices of his corrupt class.

It is an essential point in the parable that he was, not a good, but a bad man. His outer life was not as correct as the Pharisee's, yet his heart was nearer right.

The Pharisee pressed as far within the sacred precincts of the temple as he dared, but the publican stood afar off, restrained by his sense of his unworthiness from drawing nigh to the holy place. He shrank even from lifting his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast and cried, " God, be thou merciful to me a sinner."

It is one of the shortest prayers in the Bible, but it is an effective prayer that availed much.

It breaks away from all traditional forms, pious phrases and long-winded verbiage and comes right to the point. It is a plain speech and a cry of the soul. It rings true with intense conviction and sincerity.

It is a jet shot out of a heart full of its sin and wanting only to unburden itself before God.

Two points stand out prominent in the prayer.

First, the publican's sense of sin.

So far from having any sense of self-righteousness and pride, he could think of himself only as "a sinner." Any virtue of his own and all the sins of others were crowded clear out of his consciousness by the absorbing sense of his own guilt. No excuse or palliation presented itself to his mind, he was simply and purely a sinner.

The other point in the prayer is his cry for mercy.

He appeals to God, who only can forgive sin, and throws himself wholly upon his grace. He feels he can have no peace until he receives forgiveness and cleansing; nothing can be right with him until he is right with God.

This prayer is simply the cry of a soul that lets go of itself and drops its burden of sin on the divine mercy.

4. The Judgment of Jesus

We are now ready for the judgment of Jesus upon these two prayers. The one prayer is longer and more elaborate than the other, and a newspaper reporter would doubtless have spoken of it as "eloquent."

But a better judge gives a different verdict.

"I say unto you," is the emphatic statement with which Jesus introduces his judgment. The Lord of prayer, who is himself a hearer and answerer of prayer, is about to tell us how he judges prayer. It is as though the veil were torn asunder so that we could see how our prayers are received and regarded at the throne of grace.

"I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Before this revolutionary judgment the proud Pharisee, uttering great swelling words of self-congratulation, is laid low in the dust of exposure and condemnation, and the poor publican, overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and self-condemnation, is lifted up. The first is made last, and the last first.

Man looks on the outward form and notes the correctness of the grammar and the elegance of the rhetoric and the intonation of the voice, but God penetrates into the heart and looks for penitence and listens for a cry for mercy.

The grammar may be broken, but if the spirit is broken God is well pleased; a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise.

A proud spirit makes us conscious of the sins of others and turns our prayer into a conceited spectacular performance that is an offense to heaven, but a humble heart carries our prayer straight to the throne of grace, where it has power with God.

What a disclosure there might be if in a prayer meeting or fashionable church or stately cathedral the masks were suddenly torn off the praying and apparently pious people!

Many a proud Pharisee might then be revealed as well as many a penitent sinner.

We see the outward show of our worship, and it is often a beautiful sight and may be a splendid pageantry, but this may be only a sham and a pompous hypocrisy, and God looks behind the gilded pipes of the organ and beneath the silken robes of the minister and through the pious attitudes of the worshipers into the hearts of the people and judges and answers them according to the reality of their spiritual condition.

As the large and fashionable audience streams out of the church no one can tell from the outward appearance who goes home justified and who does not: but this is all written down in the judgment books of God.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. In what ways may we manifest our importunity to God?
2. How far may we press the points of a parable in its application?
3. What was wrong with the Pharisee's prayer?
4. What are good points in the publican's prayer?
5. What are some dangers in public worship?
6. How can our prayers influence God?

LESSON V—MAY 3

Jesus in the Home of Zacchæus

Lesson: Luke 19:1–10.

Golden Text: The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 103:1–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Beginning a New Life.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Repentance and Restitution.

Lesson Text: Luke 19:1–10

1 And he entered and was passing through Jericho.
2 And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich.
3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature.
4 And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.
5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.
6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.
7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.
8 And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.
9 And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.
10 For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction
1. An Unpopular Business.
2. Short Stature.
3. How Zacchæus Found Jesus.
4. How Jesus Found Zacchæus.

Jericho means the place of fragrance, the city of aromas, deriving its beautiful name from the balsam gardens and spices that scented all its air with sweet odors.

The founders of the city named it better than they knew, for Jesus perfumed it with some of the most gracious odors of his ministry.

Here he healed Bartimæus as he sat blind and ragged by the roadside begging, and saved Zacchæus the unpopular tax collector as he sat perched in a tree.

One day there was a great sensation in the sleepy old town. Word flew around that the Nazarene Prophet would pass through. He was now everywhere famous as a mighty worker and bold preacher, and it was understood that the great ecclesiastics up in Jerusalem were about to take decisive action against him. The streets were lined and thronged with sightseers waiting his coming.

In all that multitude, possibly the two men that had the hardest lots, for whom there was the least esteem and respect, and on whom there was the slightest expectation or any possibility of any blessing alighting, were Bartimæus and Zacchæus: yet they were to be picked men and on them the greatest blessings were to fall that day.

Out of all that crowd their names are the only ones that have come down to us. The last may be first.

Zacchæus had obstructions in the way of seeing Jesus. It is harder for some people to be saved than others. They differ widely in their outer circumstances and inner temperaments, and these act as helps or as hindrances to their entering the kingdom.

Zacchæus had serious disadvantages in his way, but he got in.

1. An Unpopular Business

His first disadvantage was the burden of his unpopular business. He was a publican, or collector of the Roman taxes. This business was unspeakably hateful to the Jews because it was a sign and form of Roman oppression and because in collecting the taxes the publicans resorted to every kind of threat and fraud to extract the last penny out of their victims. These taxes were "farmed out," the publican bidding in the taxes at auction in his district and then squeezing all he could out of the people.

Now imagine the situation of a Jew that would be willing to engage in this business; a renegade Jew that had first turned traitor to his country and joined hands with its enemies and had then turned upon his own people to rob them. Would not all the contempt and scorn and malice of a hot-blooded Oriental race be poured upon him?

This was the unhappy position of Zacchæus.

He was a chief publican, he had other publicans under him so that he was the head and front of the whole hated business. And so he was everywhere socially ostracized, there was no place for him among that people, on every public occasion it was best for him to keep out of the way, and whatever was going on he was made to feel that he was not wanted.

Therefore when Jesus came through the town that day and the crowd was thronging around him, Zacchæus had no chance to see him. He was contemptuously thrust out and pushed back and told to take himself off.

Zacchæus's business may be taken as a type of external difficulties in the way of seeing Jesus.

Circumstances sometimes seem to block up the door into the kingdom of God. There are businesses that no man can follow and be on the road to heaven. There are even legitimate lines of business in which it is hard to be a Christian. Evil companionships are an obvious bar to the kingdom. A low social condition, such as is found in packed tenements and dens of iniquity in great cities, makes it hard to enter.

Thus there are outer obstructions that lie across many a man's path and seem to shut him out of the kingdom of God.

2. Short Stature

The second disadvantage of Zacchæus was an internal or personal one: he was short of stature, a mere mite of a man. When Jesus came through the town what chance did he have of seeing him in that pushing, surging, hostile jam? If he had been a big burly fellow he could have crowded and crashed his way through, but with his puny arms and short legs he was shut out. It must have seemed to him that the very devil was taunting with his infirmity, saying, "Aha! you little black fragment of sin, this is no place for you: get out and stay back!" Thus this inner infirmity combined with the outer burden to keep the little renegade Jew from seeing Jesus.

This shortness of stature may stand for any personal trait that makes it difficult to see Jesus.

All have the same inner weakness of original sin, but in some it seems to be more quiescent and in others more active and virulent. There are traits of disposition, such as pride, stubbornness, love of fashion

and pleasure, that make it hard for one to enter the kingdom. Evil habits are chains upon the soul that one may not break with strong crying and tears.

Thus there are difficulties external and internal in the way of seeing Jesus and becoming a Christian, just as there are in the way of every good thing.

Zacchæus' case seemed hopeless that day. With the outer burden of his unpopular business and the inner infirmity of his short stature, he appeared to have no chance of seeing the Nazarene Prophet.

Did he then despairingly give up and sullenly go back home? No, he came there to see Jesus and he did see him.

So the little man has pluck. There is not much of him, but what there is of him is good stuff. His difficulties could not keep him away from Jesus; and our difficulties cannot keep us out of the kingdom if we only will to go in.

God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape.

3. How Zacchæus Found Jesus

How did Zacchæus overcome these difficulties and find Jesus? "He sought to see Jesus." Probably his desire first grew out of curiosity. He had heard of the Nazarene and knew that he had dared to rebuke and scorch the Pharisees, the bitterest enemies of Zacchæus, and he longed to see such a bold man and perhaps had some hope of receiving good from him.

Curiosity is not a high motive, but it is a good motive when it leads us in the right direction.

In fact, it is one of the master motives of men that has led them to many of their greatest achievements. Urged by this instinct they have explored the globe and the very heavens to the outmost star.

It is especially a good motive when it leads us to see Jesus.

It is the entering edge of knowledge and may be the entering edge of faith and eternal life.

Salvation always starts in desire.

No one can be saved that does not desire to be saved. It is intense desire that urges men to do great things, to pierce mountains and build empires and republics and only urgent desire can conquer sin and attain unto the victory of eternal life.

Zacchæus now put his wits to work and began to invent expedients.

If he could not get through that crowd he could try getting ahead of it. And so he ran; his legs were short but he made good use of them and what they lacked in length they made up in speed, and thus he got to a point where the way was clear between him and Jesus.

Some of the obstructions that lie between us and the Christian life we may not be able to break through, but we can go around them and get ahead of them.

You may not be able to destroy the bad business or bad associations you are in, but you can get out of them. You may not be able to convert your evil companions, but you can withdraw from them.

Zacchæus not only ran, but he also climbed; he pieced out the shortness of his stature by adding to it the height of that sycomore tree. He not only got away from the hostile crowd, but he also got above it so that he could see over it.

To see Jesus we must get above this world into a higher point of view.

We are too often down in a worldly crowd where we cannot see Christ. Get up into some tree of better thought and purpose, climb the tree of penitence, get up into the loftiest branches of prayer and vision, and you shall see Jesus. A mountain view and vision is often a cure for earthly ills and gives us calmness for the madness of the crowd.

Thus Zacchæus turned these very obstructions that kept him away from Jesus into stepping-stones to take him near.

That hated Jew that had no chance in that hostile throng, that little man of short stature that could not see anything, got the best view of Jesus that day.

So may we turn our hindrances into helps, and if we must get to Christ through obstructions and difficulties, infirmities and temptations, we may get all the closer to him. Thus Zacchæus found Jesus.

4. How Jesus Found Zacchæus

How, now, did Jesus find Zacchæus? He came into Zacchæus's town and walked down Zacchæus's street, and along to the tree where Zacchæus sat perched, and then he looked up and the Saviour's eyes met the sinner's eyes and they were come together. Zacchæus climbed that tree to see Jesus, and to that same tree came Jesus, we know not how far, along what weary way, to see Zacchæus. Long before Zacchæus climbed that tree Jesus was on his way to see him.

The Saviour started to find us before we ever started to find him, even before the foundation of the world.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him."

How unexpected and startling was this address to Zacchæus and to the multitude!

Zacchæus had no thought of being recognized or even of being seen by Jesus. The people also had no such thought that Jesus would take any notice of Zacchæus; he was the last man in their judgment that had any such chance.

But at the place where this man sat in the tree Jesus stopped and looked up and said unto him: what did he say?

He did not say anything unkind to him.

He made no allusion to his unpopular business or unjust practices or bad reputation. Not a word was said to sting and humiliate him before the hostile crowd. But Jesus simply said: "Zacchæus, come down, I am going home with you today."

The effect was electrical.

The people were astonished and grew critical and resentful. Many were shocked and scandalized at the dreadful turn of affairs. "Gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," was their contemptuous judgment.

But Zacchæus was as one in a dream.

He had never heard such words before. They were the first human brotherly words spoken to him since he had taken up the hated business of collecting taxes. They touched a chord in his heart that had long been silent. They made him feel that he was not an outcast but still human. Jesus simply treated this lonely persecuted man as a brother.

And it broke him all up; it melted him into instant faith and love and obedience; and he made haste and came down and received Jesus joyfully; and he renounced all his sins and would replace every fraudulent tax fourfold.

Conversion struck clear through him. Even his pocketbook did not escape.

And Jesus went home with him, and said unto him, "Today is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

Is not this the gospel in its simplicity and saving power? Jesus came into the world, not as a hard master to condemn us, but as a Brother to show us the Father and fill us with the love of God. His invitation is, Make haste, and come down and I will abide with you!

Do not stay up in that tree too long; do not take too much time in thinking over this duty and getting ready to act. Make haste, there is need of haste. Delay is dangerous, and the Saviour is passing and may soon be gone. Make haste and come down, and he will abide with you and this day shall salvation come to thy house.

"For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." This is the great need of the world as it lies in sin, crying for help and with no human hand powerful enough to lift it out of its despair.

Jesus Christ is mighty to save. His hand is lifting old empires off their hinges and introducing into the world a new spirit that is undermining evils and regenerating men into the image of God. When the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of Jericho; when does it first appear in the Bible; what is its present condition?
2. How were the Roman taxes collected and why was the business so hateful to the Jews?
3. What are some external conditions that make it difficult for us to be Christians?
4. What are some things we should do to find our way to Christ?
5. What is Christ doing to find his way to us?
6. What restitution should we make in entering the Christian life?

LESSON VI—MAY 10

The Parable of the Pounds

Lesson: Luke 19:11–26.

Golden Text: It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 103:11–18.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Partners with Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Stewardship of Money.

Lesson Text: Luke 19:11–26

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and *because* they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye *herewith* till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants, unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.

16 And the first came before him, saying, Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more.

17 And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds.

19 And he said unto him also, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that which thou layedst not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow.

22 He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow;

23 Then wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds.

25 And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.

26 I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *The Distribution of Gifts.*
2. *The Rejection of the Ruler.*
3. *Rewards for Service.*
4. *The Unfaithful Servant.*

Jesus was at this time drawing near on his final journey to Jerusalem, and the expectation that the kingdom was about to come, always so strong among the Jews, was growing intense.

This parable put the coming of the king in the indefinite future, but conspicuously emphasized present responsibilities and faithfulness.

The groundwork of the parable is framed out of the political circumstances of the time. It was common in that day for a native prince or nobleman to proceed to Rome and there, perhaps against the remonstrance of the citizens of the province, be invested with kingly authority over them, and on his return to reward his supporters with offices and emoluments and perhaps quench the opposition of his enemies in blood. Thus Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great, had gone to Rome and, against the violent protests of the Jews who hated the whole family and very name of Herod, was made king over Judea; and on his return had placed certain of his followers in authority over cities, and others of his enemies were put to death.

This political history of the time, familiar to his hearers, was evidently the background on which Jesus sketched the parable of the Pounds.

1. The Distribution of Gifts

Jesus represents himself as a nobleman who is about to depart into a far country and return.

He therefore calls his servants and entrusts to them certain means which they are to use in his interest, and thus prepare the way for his kingdom.

The ten pounds in this case represents all the gifts that are bestowed upon us. They include physical health and strength and skill of body,

native ability and education of the mind, force of will, prosperity and business, social position and influence and every means and opportunity of doing good, and especially spiritual blessings, the knowledge of salvation, forgiveness for sin, Bible and baptism, prayer and church and all the means of grace.

However we may have inherited or acquired these, they are in the last analysis gifts bestowed upon us from God.

Each servant received one pound. The point is, not that all are equal in their gifts, but that every one has received something and all are equal in their responsibility. No one is so poor in personal endowment and in privileges that he does not have at least one pound with which to serve Christ.

Yet the gift is only one pound, for it does not take a costly outfit and large stock in trade to do business in the spiritual market.

The pounds were given, not for personal use and selfish enjoyment, not to be wasted in luxury, but that they might be used and multiplied in service.

"Trade ye herewith till I come."

This is translating the facts and duties of the spiritual life into the terms of the world of trade, and the analogy applies at many points.

The capital of business is not to be spent but conserved and invested so that it will yield profit and multiply itself. So it is with the finer fabrics of the mental world, science and literature and art, truth and beauty: these are to be so studied and taught that they will grow from more to more and enrich the whole world as is now being done in the floods of new and splendid knowledge.

In the still higher world of the spirit, the graces of the soul grow as they are used and shared, multiplying in our hands as did the loaves beside the sea. All our Christian work and worship is a kind of traffic by which we invest the fine goods of the spirit so that they clothe us in ever richer garments and yield large dividends with which we are to enrich others.

We are not simply to talk religion, but trade it to make our souls and other people rich with the barter of the skies. If we are not thus traders for Christ, we are traitors to him.

2. The Rejection of the Ruler

But after the nobleman's departure, his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, "We will not have this man reign over us." The Jews thus literally rejected Jesus when they cried unto Pilate, "We have no king but Cæsar," and again when they remonstrated with him, "Write not, The King of the Jews," and they have carried out their rejection, however ignorantly or mistakenly, to this day.

But the same message is virtually sent up to heaven against Christ by all those that do not accept him and obey him as Saviour and King.

Many men in their sinful blindness and waywardness do not want anyone to rule over them because they think that government by law is slavery and that only license is liberty; whereas the truth is just the reverse of this: anarchy is the prelude to despotism, and liberty has its root in law. Russia is now bound down under despotism more restricted and galling than it ever experienced under the most arbitrary and cruel Czar, because law has been replaced by the personal will of a few.

Law is liberty, as the steel track is the liberty of the locomotive, and the more of the laws of life we obey the more liberty we have.

Christ, the King, is not a tyrant ruling by despotic will and brute force, but he is the incarnation of truth, wisdom, justice, mercy and love. His commandments are the perfect laws of life in keeping of which there is life more abundant.

The root of men's rejection of Christ's rule is that their sinful nature is out of harmony with his holy nature, in antagonism to his purity, and therefore they will not cast down every selfish impulse and evil imagination against him and come under his reasonable and righteous rule and grow into harmony and fellowship with him in which they will find their full life and liberty.

We shall never have pure and perfect and permanent life until we make Christ king and let him reign over and in us.

3. Rewards for Service

The king, having received his kingdom, in due time returned and called his servants to account. Christ is already crowned King of kings in the court of heaven; he is ever returning to call his servants to account

and he will finally come at the last day and distribute eternal rewards.

The king summoned into his presence the servants "unto whom he had given the money, that he might know what they had gained by trading." He made no impossible or unreasonable demands of his servants, did not try to reap where he had not sown, but expected to receive only a just return upon the money he had loaned.

Ability precedes and measures responsibility, and God expects profits only upon the capital which he has entrusted to us.

The first servant came saying, "Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more."

This man had traded in the market of good works until his profits exceeded his capital ten times and his investments had increased one thousand per cent.

Commerce creates wealth. Dollars do not multiply as long as they are hoarded up, but remain barren and rust away; it is only as they are poured into the channels of trade and sent on errands of usefulness that they begin to grow and beget other dollars and add up into large profits.

Every just bargain pays at both ends: seller and buyer are both made richer thereby.

Farmer, manufacturer, merchant and consumer are each and all enriched as they keep moving their goods along the channels of trade. If all interchange of commodities and services ceased and every one lived unto himself, the world would soon be reduced to universal poverty and helplessness.

Giving is a means of more abundant getting, and a mart is a prolific mother of wealth. Spiritual goods obey the same law.

Hoarded up, kept from service and for self, they lie barren and wither away; but put to service, exchanged in the social market of human helpfulness, poured into the channels of spiritual commerce, they circulate around the world and yield interest and gather profit. They increase the world's stock of truth and wisdom and righteousness, of service and sympathy and sacrifice; and they come back to us enhanced a hundred or a thousand fold. Right thoughts and good deeds, the means and the opportunities of service, need only be exchanged in the

market of conduct and they will be transmuted into the fine gold and precious gems and beautiful raiment of pure and rich character.

No other investments will yield so large profits and are so sure of their returns.

The stock market is a very unsafe place of investment, as many know to their sorrow, but the investments in the things of the spirit and the bank of heaven are safe from declining markets and from moth and rust and thieving hands.

Upon this servant the king pronounced the benediction of faithfulness and made him ruler over ten cities.

Serving is a preparation for ruling.

Life is full of illustrations of this law. Look into any field of business and you will find that those now at the top once began and were faithful at the bottom. Faithfulness in low things has advanced them to high things. So is it in spiritual service.

The discipline that binds us down in faithful obedience to Christ is developing and disciplining our powers into masterful self-control and strength of will that will at last fit us to wear a crown over a wider field and larger responsibilities in life. If we let this Man reign over us, he will let us reign with him.

4. The Unfaithful Servant

There was one dark exception in the line of faithful servants. He returned his pound just as he had received it, and declared that he had kept it laid up in a napkin because he feared the king as an austere and unjust master. He had received the same capital and had the same opportunities of trade as the other servants, but he was unfaithful to his trust and had no profits to return.

It is to be feared that such unfaithful servants are more numerous than one in ten.

Many have gifts of endowment and learning and skill, of prayer and song, of property and position, of means and opportunities for service, but as far as the world and the Master are concerned they keep these tied up in a napkin of disuse and selfishness.

The unfaithful servant's excuse was false and he convicted himself out of his own mouth.

His own statement was his own condemnation. No witnesses were needed to be called against him, but just let him speak and he would convict himself.

None of our excuses will stand examination and judgment.

Our own hearts know better and condemn us as we invent false pleas, and God is greater than our hearts. God will only need to turn our own words against us and we shall stand guilty.

Retribution was visited upon the unfaithful servant by taking away his pound and giving it to him that had ten pounds, in accordance with the deep principle that unto him that hath shall be given and from him that through his own unfaithfulness hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.

In the struggle of nature the more vigorous plant draws nourishment from the less vigorous, and the stronger animal crowds the weaker to the wall and wins in life's battle.

Natural selection is ever taking from that which hath not and giving to that which hath.

The destruction of the poor is their poverty, and wealth begets wealth.

The same law runs up through the spiritual world.

Unused powers wither. Body and mind, property and position, all the possessions and privileges of life, must be in vigorous use and growth, or degeneration will set in. We cannot wrap these up in a napkin and keep them; when we open the napkin we shall find only moth-eaten cloth and rust. The soft white linen, in which some people daintily enfold their possessions that they may keep them for themselves, at last becomes a shroud that contains only bones.

Only as we use our means and powers in the great field of social service for rectitude in government, justice in business, purity in the home, faithfulness in the church and devotion to the kingdom of God in the world shall we reap immediate and far-off rewards. Our pounds are everyday adding themselves up in compound interest, or are withering away in wasted lives.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give some account of the political background of this parable.
2. What pounds have been entrusted to us?
3. How may we manifest our unwillingness to have Christ reign over us?
4. How may we use our pounds in spiritual trading?
5. How do the spiritual goods of life multiply by use?

LESSON VII—MAY 17

Jesus Enters Jerusalem as King

Lesson: Luke 19:28–20:47.

Golden Text: He is Lord of lords, and King of kings. Revelation 17:14.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 24.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Loyalty to the King.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Supremacy of Jesus.

Lesson Text: Luke 19:29–42, 45–48

29 And it came to pass, when he drew nigh unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples,

30 Saying, Go your way into the village over against *you;* in which as ye enter ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat: loose him, and bring him.

31 And if any one ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say, The Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went away, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they threw their garments upon the colt, and set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their garments in the way.

37 And as he was now drawing nigh, *even* at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen;

38 Saying, Blessed *is* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from the multitude said unto him, Teacher, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said, I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.

41 And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it,

42 Saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

45 And he entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold,

46 Saying unto them, It is written, And my house shall be a house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of robbers.

47 And he was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him:

48 And they could not find what they might do; for the people all hung upon him, listening.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. An Eventful Day.

2. A Suggestive Incident.

3. The Procession.
4. A Shocking Scene.
5. Criticism.

On the morning of Palm Sunday there was a great stir in Bethany and along the roads leading to Jerusalem.

It was understood that Jesus was to enter the city that day.

The people were gathering in crowds and seemed bent on signalizing his entrance with a popular demonstration. Jesus for the first time permitted a public recognition and celebration of his rights as Messiah and King.

The end was approaching with fatal swiftness, and he had to offer himself as Messiah and Lord, if only that he might be rejected.

It was the springtime and nature set the scene in a framework of beauty. A mass of fresh colors lay palpitating on the landscape. The dark rich green of the olives covered the hillsides, the air was balmy with the breath of spring and fragrant with buds and blossoms, along the eastern horizon stretched the blue rim of the mountains of Moab, and over it all flashed the splendor of an Oriental sky.

Everything gave promise of an eventful day.

1. An Eventful Day

A colt was procured and the disciples, having thrown their robes on it, placed Jesus upon it and the procession started.

It would not have compared in magnificence with many a procession that has attended the inauguration of a president or the coronation of a king, but it meant more for the world.

In the enthusiasm of their joy the people tore off branches from palm and olive trees and carpeted the road with greenery and even cast their garments in the way, while shouts rang out over the hills. Slowly the procession wound up the Mount of Olives. At the summit the road takes a sharp turn to the north, and at this point Jerusalem suddenly breaks on the view. The sight is an impressive spectacle even at this day, but on that day it was one of the wonders of the world. The city sat like a jeweled crown on the brow of Mount Zion. In the foreground

rose the marble walls of the temple of stainless whiteness, crowned with its glittering gilded roof, a mass of snow and gold; in the background stretched the streets and squares of the city, and over it all lay the spell of a thousand years of history, crowded with patriotic and sacred associations.

At the first sight of the city, Jesus burst into tears.

What an unaccountable interruption of the festivities of the hour! Even in the midst of his joys and triumphs Jesus was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. The sight of that holy city heavily burdened with sin that was about to reject him moved him to tears.

The procession swept down into the valley of Kedron and up the slope of Zion, gathering volume and intensifying its joy as it rolled along. It poured into the temple area and overflowed into the city. Jesus himself passed into the temple, cleansed it of its unholy traffic and wrought works of healing. The crowds dispersed and in the evening Jesus quietly returned to Bethany.

Nothing seems to have been accomplished; and yet the triumphal entry had deep and rich significance.

2. A Suggestive Incident

The incident of finding the colt is suggestive. Jesus directed two of his disciples to go into a neighboring village where they would find a colt tied which they were to unloose and bring to him. If anyone questioned them as to their authority, they were to answer, "The Lord hath need of him."

By this title Jesus Christ is the universal proprietor and maintains ownership and mastership over all things.

The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. Our property, powers and attainments are rightfully his and ought instantly to be subject to his disposal. Yet a strange sovereignty is this "hath need."

The Son of God must have a colt; the Lord of glory is stopped until he can get an ass on which to ride!

Christ in a sense is dependent on us. He works through means, and our human ability exactly matches his divine need.

"And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he said unto them."

Unquestioning obedience followed the command.

They might have raised objections, pointed out difficulties and dangers involved in such action, but they simply trusted Jesus and did as he said. Of course we do not know all the circumstances and this matter of the colt may have been arranged with the owner. This is the secret of a plain path and a peaceful life. We are trying to solve too many problems when we need only trust God and let him order our steps.

If we have a listening ear and an obedient will he will tell us where to go and what to find.

The disciples found everything "even as he said." Things had a way of coming to pass as he said. We can go forward along every path of duty certain that we shall find just what Jesus told us.

If the disciples found a colt as he said, much more shall we find sure guidance, since he has told us that he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

3. The Procession

All things were now ready and the procession started. Garments were cast down and greenery strewn along the dusty road until it became a carpeted and embroidered path of splendor fit for royalty, and the hills rang with shouts, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Several ideas were expressed in this action.

Disciples must prepare the way for Jesus.

He cannot go through the world in a triumphal march unless we go with him and before him and make a path for him. Human agencies may open the way along which the Spirit of Christ goes into human hearts and in the world.

This service costs sacrifice.

Garments must be cast down to make the way along which Christ walks. Things that are good and precious to us, our possessions, time and talents, the very necessities of life, must, if duty demands, be sacrificed.

Nothing is too fine and costly to become part of this path.

The feet of Jesus should not touch the common dust but should press upon our most precious things.

And this path should be one of beauty.

The highway of salvation along which Jesus travels should not seem to be a hard and forbidding road, but it should be so carpeted and festooned that the world will see that it is a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.

The most prominent feature of this procession was its enthusiasm.

The people were not afraid to shout. They believed in Jesus with all their might and expressed their devotion in Oriental outbursts of joy. They were not ashamed of their King, and when the city was stirred and shaken with excitement and the question of the hour was, "Who is this?" they boldly answered, "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

It took some courage to say that up in Jerusalem.

The people grew wild in their enthusiasm and the hills near and far caught up and flung back their glad hosannas.

This is a spirit that is evaporating out of our religious life and that we need to keep and intensify. We are growing so reserved and formal, so respectable and dignified, that we are afraid to speak out in religious meetings. Our boiling enthusiasm cools into fastidious speech and then freezes into silence. Even the Methodists are ceasing to shout!

We need more fervency and fire in our religious life and on proper occasions should not think it unseemly to shout. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"

4. A Shocking Scene

The procession paused a moment at the summit of the Mount of Olives while Jesus gazed upon the holy city and wept over it.

Tears were ever near the surface of his soul as he walked through the sinful world, and our service and our very joys will meet and

mingle with much that will unseal our emotions and break our hearts.

The royal procession swept up into the city and filled the city with excitement. Jesus entered the temple precincts and exercised kingly authority.

A shocking scene there met his view.

Immense numbers of animals were needed for the feasts and offerings, and worshipers bought these in Jerusalem. Money also had to be exchanged so that the temple tax could be paid in the legal Hebrew coin.

This business had invaded the precincts of the temple.

The cattle and the merchandise and the traffic, the crowds and confusion, the clamorous hawking and haranguing of the noisy Oriental dealers, the cheating and frauds, were a wicked and intolerable nuisance and desecration in the place of worship.

Jesus ordered the dealers out and upset the tables of the money-changers, telling them that they had made the house of prayer a den of robbers.

The noisy venders knew they were defiling the temple and quailed before and slunk away from the lofty righteousness of Jesus, "the starry light that shone from his eyes and the divine majesty that beamed from his features."

The house of worship should be kept clear and clean of all unfitting and desecrating uses.

Things that may be proper and necessary elsewhere may be improper and sacrilegious in the house of God. Unworthy associations should not despoil the beauty of its holiness.

More difficult and necessary it is that we so should keep out wrong thoughts and motives as we worship in it.

If while listening to the prophet up in the pulpit we are only calculating profits down in the pew, or if we are cherishing thoughts of pride and vanity, we are indeed desecrating the house of God as truly as though we were noisily transacting in it the business of the office and market.

5. Criticism

Criticism on this occasion was not lacking.

When was there ever a day or an event so successful and good that somebody did not find fault?

We could infallibly name the critics on this occasion without seeing the record. "Some of the Pharisees!" Bigoted and blind to the last; never knowing the day of their visitation; zealous for the temple of the Lord and rejecting the Lord of the temple and driving him out of its very precincts!

Still is it possible that the ecclesiastics and worshipers in the temple may be the enemies of the Lord of the temple and expel from it the very Christ whom they profess to worship.

The enthusiasm had become so contagious that the very children were crying out their hosannas, but the ministers of religion were looking on with scowling scornful faces. It was the children, too, that their criticism seized upon and objected to.

Even yet young people cannot show unusual interest and earnestness and enthusiasm in the church without exciting the disapproval and displeasure of some critics.

These priests and scribes hotly said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke thy disciples." Or as it is recorded in Matthew, "Hearest thou what these are saying?" (Matt. 21:16). Jesus answered, "Yes, of course; cheery, hearty, yea, not without enjoyment of the ridiculous distress of the sanctimonious guardians of the temple."

God loves children and Jesus hears them, and woe to the church that silences their voices.

If we will not let them speak and sing and shout, "the stones will cry out."

Having cleaned out the temple and rebuked the priests, Jesus "left them and went forth out of the city to Bethany." The great day was over and nothing had come of it. Jesus was not yet king.

And never will he be king by such means.

Doubtless the disciples had high expectations and thought that the processions and the banners and the shouts would surely carry Jesus

to his throne and put them in great places in his kingdom. But Jesus himself had no such expectation and experienced no disappointment, for he knew that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

We are still strongly disposed to put our trust in outward means and spectacular show. Our great churches and stately buildings and gorgeous ceremonies give us a sense of pride as though these would put Jesus on his throne. But all these are a vain trust and hollow mockery except as they are filled with the spirit of Christ and enthrone him in our hearts.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How do we observe Palm Sunday?
2. What are ways in which we can prepare a path for Jesus in the world and make him king?
3. What is the place and value of processions and pageantry in the church?
4. How may we improperly bring our business into the church?
5. What kind of criticism of the church is blameworthy and what kind is proper and useful?

LESSON VIII—MAY 24

Jesus Preparing for the End

Lesson: Luke 21:1–22:23.

Golden Text: This do in remembrance of me. Luke 22:19.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:1–6.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Meaning of the Lord's Supper

Topic for Young People and Adults: Meaning of the Lord's Supper.

Lesson Text: Luke 22:7–23

7 And the day of unleavened bread came, on which the passover must be sacrificed.

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and make ready for us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we make ready?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house whereinto he goeth.

11 And ye shall say unto the master of the house, The Teacher saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he will show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 For I say unto you, I shall not eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he received a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 For I say unto you, I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, *even* that which is poured out for you.

21 But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

22 For the Son of man indeed goeth, as it hath been determined: but woe unto that man through whom he is betrayed!

23 And they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Preparation.

2. Betrayal.

3. The Bread and Cup.
4. Remembrance.
5. Prophecy.

Tuesday of Passion Week was the last day of Christ's public ministry and was followed by a day of rest in Bethany. It was the lull before the storm. The conspiracy of death was gathering in its malignancy and marshalling its forces for a final and fatal outburst of fury.

Jesus knew what was coming.

The cross was no surprise or disaster to him and did not cause him to falter a single step. Calmly he rested and gathered strength for the supreme trial.

His ministry was fulfilled and he was ready to be offered.

On Thursday afternoon the preparation for the Passover was made and on Thursday evening, which was the beginning of Friday, the Passover was eaten and the Lord's Supper was instituted.

1. Preparation

The preparation for the ordinance is instructive. On the first day of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:17–20) the disciples asked Jesus where he would have them prepare the Passover.

Jesus kept the ordinances of the church down to the very day of his death.

Though this ordinance had fulfilled its purpose and was about to pass, yet he honored it in its last moments. Ordinances are the body in which the spirit of religion is incarnated, and we are not likely to have the spirit if we cast off the body.

Those that reject or neglect the ordinances of worship cannot quote the example of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus gave a singular reply to this inquiry. He sent Peter and John to find a place in Jerusalem, yet did not tell them definitely where it was but told them a man bearing a pitcher of water would meet them and they were to follow him. (Compare the finding of the colt for the triumphal entry. Luke 19:30.) Jesus may have made such an arrangement with a friend, and there were doubtless reasons for this course, such as the need of caution and secrecy in the presence of watchful enemies.

This incident is another beautiful illustration of the method of divine guidance.

Jesus did not reveal to the disciples their path to the end of their search, but gave them directions for part of the way up to a point where they would receive further instruction and guidance. Their path was partly revealed and partly concealed, and it was only by following up what they did know that they could find out what they did not know and thus reach their destination.

This is always the method of providence.

We ever can see our path before us for only a little distance, and then it is lost to view. But when we go as far as we can see, some sign-board of providence indicates the course we are to follow and thus we are ever led onward.

Let us not ask to "see the distant scene: one step enough for me."

We do not know where this "upper room" was which the disciples found. The birthplace of great events is often lost in oblivion.

But in this humble room occurred one of the greatest events of history. From this unknown chamber issued a stream of blessing that has flowed down through all the ages and will continue to bless the world "till he come."

2. Betrayal

In the evening the little company gathered in the appointed place and the Passover meal began. As they were sitting at the table occurred the unseemly strife among the disciples as to who should be greatest, followed by the condescension and humility of Jesus in washing their feet (Luke 22:24–30; John 13:1–20).

Selfishness pushed its ugly presence into this holy hour, and our best moments are often marred with evil suggestion.

As they were eating the disciples were startled with the announcement of Jesus, "Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." This unexpected disclosure filled the disciples with alarm.

Such baseness excited their horror.

Could it be possible there was such treachery among them? "And they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing." Judas himself had the boldness and effrontery to speak up and say, "Is it I, Rabbi?" and received from Jesus the flat answer, "Thou hast said."

The form of their question was good.

They did not point the finger of suspicion at one another and say, "Is it you? Is this baseness lying coiled up in your heart?"

This was true self-examination and was their best safeguard.

Our first impulse often is to think others worse than ourselves, and we impute to them evil we never suspect may be in our own hearts. But the thought that should first strike us and most deeply concern us is, "Is it I?"

There are hidden possibilities of evil in us of which we may be seldom or never conscious.

There are moments, as when a great crime is committed, or when temptation suddenly assails us, in which we are revealed to ourselves as by a flash of lightning and get glimpses into the undreamed-of and frightful depths of evil in our hearts that fill us with alarm and horror. Then we know that in our supposed immaculate virtue and boasted strength we are never safe.

We need to keep in close acquaintance with our hearts and never assume that we may not be guilty of the deepest sin. "I have never heard of a crime," said the pure and passionless Emerson, "that I myself might not have committed."

3. The Bread and Cup

As they were about to eat the Passover Jesus said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you."

The Lord's Supper thus was not an abrupt creation but a further evolution. The new ordinance grew out of the old and was the fulfilment

and perfect blossom of the old. Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil, and Christianity is not a new faith but the final outgrowth and fruitage of the old faith.

These few and simple words are one of the most deeply significant and precious passages of Scripture.

Here we are on holy ground and our meditations should be pervaded with tender reverence. These emblems are rich in ideas.

The great central idea is sacrifice. The cross has a blood-red heart.

The broken bread represents the broken body, and the poured-out cup the shed blood of Christ.

The scarlet thread of sacrifice is woven into the whole web of the universe.

The very limestone rock on which the cross stood rooted was composed of the tiny bones of countless myriads of animals broken and ground up that they might impart their life to higher life and even provide a footing for the cross of Christ! The mother lays her life on the altar of sacrifice for her child, and the father will sacrifice all, even life itself, for his wandering boy. These are but drops of sacrifice from the heart of God.

The supreme instance of sacrifice is the cross of Calvary on which the Father gave his Son and the Son freely gave himself as the expression of their infinite love.

This is an offering, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that has virtue to atone for all sin and wash the guilty race clean.

Another great idea in this ordinance is that of food for the soul.

Bread passes into the blood and is assimilated into tissue and reappears in the strength and beauty of the body. But man cannot live by bread alone. The soul has its hunger and must have bread or die.

Christ is this bread of life that cometh down from heaven.

He satisfies our hearts and is assimilated into our spirits and reappears in the strength and fruitfulness and beauty of our lives.

Another prominent idea in this ordinance is fellowship.

It is the " communion " of the Lord's Supper, communion with him and with one another. The world over, eating bread together is a sign and means of brotherhood, and this fellowship reaches its fullest and finest expression around the table of our common Lord. " We, being many, are one bread and one body."

Here all divisive lines should be obliterated and we should be bound into the unity of the spirit with the bond of peace.

These outward emblems are simple and unadorned, but their inner meaning is rich and goes deep.

The significance of any sign is not to be measured by the nature of the sign itself. The flag of our country is only so much colored silk or muslin, and yet what a mighty meaning does it carry wherever it floats, representing the law and order, the power and majesty, and the history and glory of a great nation. A little flock of hair carefully preserved may seem to the undiscerning eye of a stranger of slight significance, but to the bereaved mother it suggests thoughts and memories that are too deep for tears.

So this bread and cup may seem common and meaningless to the world, but to believers through all ages they have been and are precious beyond any other symbol in the world.

4. Remembrance

" This do," Jesus said to his disciples, " in remembrance of me."

Why did Jesus wish to be remembered? Partly for his own sake.

He had a natural human craving for such remembrance and the thought that he might be forgotten and his very name lost in oblivion would have been painful to him. Immortality is wrapped up in this wide, deep yearning of the heart; we cannot believe that we are only creatures of an hour and will quickly pass into the night of forgotten names. Jesus craves this remembrance and as long as this bread and cup pass from hand to hand among his followers, he will have his reward and be satisfied.

Jesus also wanted us to remember him for our own sakes.

Memory is one of the ties that bind us to him, a vital artery through which his teaching and influence and presence pass into us and become

incorporated in our life. This commemoration is one of the means by which we are brought into close and tender fellowship with him and renew our pledge of loyalty to him, and it could not pass out of our lives without irreparable spiritual loss and impoverishment of soul. If Christ is ever forgotten in this world, Christianity will wither and be blown away by the winds of the centuries and itself be forgotten.

The church catholic clings to this symbol and when it is abandoned decline sets in. It is one of the universal ties that bind all branches of Christianity into unity and it expresses its very heart and life.

5. Prophecy

The ordinance also has in it a gleam of prophecy. It looks back upon the past in remembrance, but it also looks forward into the future " till he come " in that day when, as he promised, " I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

It thus links Christ's first with his final coming.

How slender and frail the thread of continuity and yet how long it has lasted. How perishable are the elements and yet how imperishable is the memorial! It is one of the oldest things in the world and will yet outlast all material fabrics of human hands, Egyptian pyramid and Roman wall.

Men make every effort to perpetuate their names in the world; they write books and paint pictures, or they rear marble shafts or pile up vast pyramids of stone. But the books are soon forgotten, the marble crumbles into dust, and the huge pyramid disappears or its very meaning is lost in oblivion.

This bread and cup is the only material monument Jesus Christ left to his memory.

It seems frailer than a spider's thread, and yet it has survived through all the revolutions of nineteen hundred years, outlasting cities and empires.

It must have in it some substance and vitality that the world will not let die. It has deep rich roots, but it has not yet come to its perfect blossom and ripe fruit and its great significance and full fruitage are yet to be fulfilled.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give other Scripture instances illustrating the ways of divine guidance.
2. Trace the steps by which Judas arrived at his treachery.
3. Give instances of other symbols in our life.
4. Of what use is memory in our lives?
5. How may we improve our use of the Lord's Supper?

LESSON IX—MAY 31

Jesus in Gethsemane

Lesson: Luke 22:24–71.

Golden Text: Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. Luke 22:42.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 130.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Obeying God at Any Cost.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Meaning of Gethsemane.

Lesson Text: Luke 22:39–54

39 And he came out, and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him.

40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was parted from them about a stone's cast; and he kneeled down and prayed,

42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

45 And when he rose up from his prayer, he came unto the disciples, and found them sleeping for sorrow,

46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

47 While he yet spake, behold, a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them; and he drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

49 And when they that were about him saw what would follow, they said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

50 And a certain one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye *them* thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

52 And Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and elders, that were come against him, Are ye come out, as against a robber, with swords and staves?

53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched not forth your hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

54 And they seized him, and led him *away*, and brought him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed afar off.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Garden.

2. The Inner Circle of Disciples.

3. A Wonderful Prayer.

4. Mysterious Agony.
5. The Victory Won.
6. The Betrayal.

It is a wide step and sudden change of weather from the peace and fellowship of the upper chamber in Jerusalem to the shadows and sorrow of Gethsemane. The passage was made about midnight across the Kedron and up the slopes of Olivet, and then in this garden was fought the real battle of the cross.

Gethsemane won the victory of Calvary. Out of this agony Jesus stepped calm and strong for the final hour.

We must win our battles before we come to them in secret prayer and gathered strength.

1. The Garden

Jesus with his disciples "went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives," for it was for him a place of retirement and prayer (John 18:2). Gethsemane was the name of the garden (Mark 14:32). The name means "the oil press" and was an orchard of olive trees such as is found there today.

The name is deeply significant and always touches a tender chord of sorrow in our hearts. Every life has its Gethsemane.

At the entrance to the garden Jesus left the eight disciples and went apart to engage in prayer.

Prayer was his preparation for his passion.

He wanted to see full and clear the light of the Father's face before he stepped into the final darkness. He sought to fall into full and perfect surrender to the will of God and feel the assuring, sustaining power of his presence; he knew full well that he could then bear his cross.

He also bade his disciples to pray that "ye enter not into temptation." Temptation besets us in every hour, even when we might think it is far from us, and it dogged the steps of these disciples right into this holy garden.

Prayer is the highest preparation for every duty and burden. It quiets the soul and clears its vision so that it can see the path of truth and duty.

In entering any Gethsemane let us enter through the gate of prayer, and then we can endure the agony and may be able to come out calm and strong.

2. The Inner Circle of Disciples

Of the eleven disciples now with him, he took with him Peter and James and John as his special friends (Mark 24:33). The three witnesses of the transfiguration were also witnesses of the agony of Gethsemane. They saw Jesus on the mountain top, transfigured with glory, and they saw him in the shadows, bowed under sorrow and bloody with sweat: by such scenes were they fitted to be witnesses to the world.

It was James and John who, in asking to sit on the throne with Jesus, had said they were able to drink of his cup, and here they saw what that cup was.

Why did Jesus, leaving the other disciples behind, take these three with him?

Partly as a guard against interruption, but mainly for the sympathy and support of their presence. They were the inner circle of the twelve that understood him best and trusted him most.

It was a beautiful and pathetic exhibition of the humanity of Jesus that in this hour of trial he wanted his dearest friends near by.

Their simple presence helped to support and comfort him; he was so much stronger by reason of their added strength.

Sympathy has a wonderful power to lighten burdens.

Solitary suffering is doubly hard to bear. It gives us a sense of unsupported and forsaken loneliness that kills all courage and fills us with despair. The presence of a friend rallies our energies and inspires us with new life. There are many lonely burdened hearts in the great Gethsemane of this world, and, as opportunity offers, we ought to support and comfort them.

It was the simple presence of these chosen disciples that Jesus wanted, not their talk.

There was nothing they could say to him that would help him; but their watchful waiting near by would comfort him. The best sympathy is not that which is most talkative and fussy: the silent presence, the sympathetic tear, the thoughtful helpful act, these go deeper.

There are chambers of sorrow in which voluble speech is an impertinence and silence is soothing to the soul.

3. A Wonderful Prayer

Out of this garden floated one of the most wonderful prayers in the Word of God; out of this darkness and agony came strong trust and calm submission. Jesus kneeled and prayed saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

"Father" must ever be the first word of our prayer and it showers upon us the most charming memories and suggestions.

We cannot pray to an "Unknowable power" or an infinite "What is it?"

"All things are possible unto thee" (Mark 13:36) is the strong ground of confidence the prayer first laid down. Prayer has no meaning unless it first puts God on the throne. If his power and providence are so limited that they can effect no change in our condition, prayer would be logically and practically blocked at the door of our lips.

Faith asserts the sovereignty of God and then commits all things into his hand.

Yet the power of God is not unbridled and arbitrary caprice, but is controlled by truth and goodness and grace. There are some things God cannot do: he cannot lie, he cannot violate his own holy nature.

These limitations, however, are not imposed upon him from without, but spring from within and are the expression of his character and wisdom and are thereby his perfect freedom.

God can do all things he wants to do.

"Remove this cup from me": what a pathetic cry, how human it is! The cup of the cross was already becoming so bitter that Jesus instinctively drew back from it in horror and prayed that it might be taken away.

The humanity of the Son of God is here laid bare down to its shrinking quivering nerves.

As he looked full at the cross, for a moment he wavered and his faith paused. This was not human sinfulness, but only that human shrinking which is one of the safeguards of our life.

It is right for us to pray that the cup of trouble may pass.

All the saints have cried to God in their Gethsemane, " Deliver me out of all tribulation " (1 Samuel 26: 24).

" Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." This was the strong and sure check Jesus put upon his own will, the invulnerable safeguard he threw around himself against unholy desires and mistaken forbidden petitions, the mighty rock on which he kneeled.

A saving and beautiful word is this " nevertheless " that kept Jesus in his darkest hour within the circle of the Father's wise and supreme will.

These elements of the Master's prayer are still the grounds and safeguards of prayer for us. We also must take our stand on the sovereignty of God and be sure he can command all the forces of the universe and cause them to work together for good. We also may shrink in our human infirmity and fear from life's trials and agonies, but God knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust and will be patient with us.

Yet we must trust him and meet every insurgence of our will with a " nevertheless " that will put God's will over ours and accept it as best for us, even the fullest expression of the Father's love.

4. Mysterious Agony

In this hour of agony and wavering faith of Jesus " his sweat became great drops of blood falling down upon the ground," and he " began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy " and said, " My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death."

We cannot enter into all the meaning of this anguish, for it involves roots and relations that stretch infinitely beyond our understanding and experience; it is a burden of mystery of which our minds can touch only the outer edge and fringe.

This was the cost of our redemption.

Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Redemption always costs a great price. A thousand battlefields have bought the liberties we now inherit. The blood of countless generations has become our blessing.

In the political world human freedom has been purchased at a great price. It took a great bath of blood to cleanse our flag of the foul blot of slavery and mend its rent; but today our country stands clean and free and united as it never could have done without that great struggle and heavy cost. The Great War is the greatest price the world has ever paid, and while we cannot yet see its outcome and blessing the future will reveal it. Our intellectual progress has cost the sweat of countless brains, and the path of moral and spiritual advancement has been paved with broken hearts. We see the masterpieces of the painter, but not the repeated efforts and sleepless nights of the artist over many a ruined picture before he attained his ideal.

Gethsemane is the preparation and the price of every achievement. Let us not think to escape this path and pain. The Master trod it: shall not the servant tread it still?

5. The Victory Won

Three times Jesus returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. He seems to have felt so dependent on their sympathy and support that he wanted to assure himself of their presence and watchfulness.

On their part the lateness of the hour, the quiet of the garden, the excitement and anxiety through which they had been passing, the great benumbing grief that was upon them, the drowsiness of sorrow and the soothing silence of the shadows, all combined to overpower them with slumber.

It was human weakness which Jesus excused and yet he could hardly excuse Peter. "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest not thou watch one hour?" (Mark 14:37). "The spirit truly is ready," he said, "but the flesh is weak." When temptation is near, when duty is pressing, when Jesus needs us, we ought to be vigilant and faithful and, though the flesh is weak, the spirit should be aroused and assert its mastery.

The sentinel must not fall asleep at his post, and there are times when Christians should keep awake and not sleep.

Returning the third time, Jesus spoke in calm tones: "Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come." He had passed beyond the need of their help.

His victory was won.

The cross was already as good as behind him. With calm courage that feared no evil, with masterful faith that scattered the darkness of Calvary, he said, "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

6. The Betrayal

While he was yet saying these words the multitude of the mob and the soldiers and officers were at the gate of the garden. Jesus calmly stepped forth and inquired, "Whom seek ye?" and Judas stepped forth from the crowd and gave him the betrayer's kiss.

The disciples were angered and talked of resistance and impulsive Peter did whip out his sword and sliced off the right ear of a servant of the high priest.

But the gentle Jesus was governed by other principles.

He that bravely faced the crowd and displayed his manhood now promptly disowned the sword and exhibited his meekness.

If Jesus had been a rash weak man he, too, would probably have resorted to the sword. We are all victims of the feeling that if we could only strike a man down we would have the victory over him.

Jesus had a more powerful defense and victory in his own personality, for the crowd now went backward and fell upon the ground. No doubt conscience made cowards of them all.

But his personality must have shone out of his appearance in impressive power.

The starry radiance of his eyes, the lofty majesty stamped upon his countenance, the transparent truth and purity and peace of his soul, the calmness of his poise and bearing, all combined into a total personality that put a subtle and irresistible spell upon those that came into his presence and laid them prostrate before him.

Is not all the world now feeling the mysterious power of this same divine person and will it not yet lead mankind to crown him Lord of all?

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What other gardens are mentioned in the Bible?
2. Of what use are friends?
3. What part has suffering and sacrifice played in human progress?
4. What are some other great prayers in the Bible?
5. How can we win our victories before we come to them?
6. Is there ever a place for the sword in Christian defense?

LESSON X—JUNE 7

Jesus Crucified

Lesson: Luke 23.

Golden Text: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:7–12.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: What we Owe to the Lord Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Love's Supreme Sacrifice.

Lesson Text: Luke 23:33–46

33 And when they came unto the place which is called The skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, his chosen.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, offering him vinegar,

37 And saying, If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And there was also a superscription over him, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us.

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.

43 And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

44 And it was now about the sixth hour, and a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour,

45 The sun's light failing: and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Place of a Skull.

2. The Cross.

3. A Wonderful Prayer.

4. The Gambling Soldiers.

5. An Unconscious Eulogy.
6. The Inscription.
7. The Final Scene.

We now come to the summit of Christian salvation, the mountain that spiritually overtops all the mountains in the world. The world has many battlefields, some of which mark supreme struggles and crises in history and draw visitors from all lands.

But this "green hill" without the city wall so far away was indeed the scene of the greatest battle and tragedy of all time, and from it flow streams of life for all the world.

From Pilate's judgment hall Jesus was led away to the place of crucifixion. He was made to carry his own cross, but on the way an African Jew was compelled to share the burden. A company of women followed him, bewailing his fate, but Jesus bade them to weep not for him but for themselves.

In all that throng he was the only one who did not need to weep.

At last the procession reached the place where the great tragedy was enacted.

This was a central point and climax towards which for centuries the lines of prophecy had been converging, and from which have ever since issued streams of blessing that are everywhere making the world rejoice and blossom as the rose.

1. The Place of a Skull

The name of the place was Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvary in Latin. It was outside the city on the Damascus road. The name, meaning a skull, was probably given to a small knoll of rock in the shape of a skull and it was a significant name for the place of man's redemption.

How eloquent of death is a skull!

The delicate organs of sight and sound and speech that were so expressive of life are utterly gone, leaving only dark caverns staring blankly around. And the great golden bowl of the brain, once the seat of intelligence and affection and will, is empty forever.

So is it with man in his sin.

It was fitting, then, that the cross should be lifted at Golgotha, the place of a skull, for it was to bear the guilt of sin and undo all its work.

On that cross were to be nailed all the wounds and woes that have reduced man to a skull, and from it were to issue such virtue and power as would restore his shattered faculties and make him once more a living soul.

2. The Cross

" There they crucified him." The soldiers that led Jesus to the place of crucifixion promptly dispatched the business which was their professional trade.

The mode of Christ's death had been shadowed forth under a variety of types and figures. The brazen serpent signified that he was to be lifted up; the lamb upon the altar that his blood was to be shed. His hands and his feet were to be pierced, he was to be wounded and tormented, his ears were to be filled with revilings, upon his vesture lots were to be cast, and vinegar was to be given him to drink.

These numerous and diverse requirements as to the Messiah's death had been foretold in Jewish prophecy.

And now the Gentile world came forward with a mode of execution that marvelously combined them all.

An instrument of execution had been invented by the cruelty of the human heart that was the terror of the ancient world. This was the cross. It was only two beams of wood nailed together crosswise, but it was armed with almost preternatural power of inflicting suffering.

The victim was first stripped quite naked and scourged with whips, leather thongs into which bits of iron had been woven, until his flesh was all lacerated and bleeding. He was then laid upon the cross, his arms stretched out upon the cross beam, and large iron spikes ruthlessly driven through hands and feet into the solid wood behind. The cross, bearing its victim, was raised upright and dropped into the hole dug for it with a violent jolt. Hanging on four great wounds, naked under a blazing sun, torn and bleeding, with wounds inflaming, fiery thirst raging, every nerve quivering with pain, the sufferer endured the mortal agony one or even two days, before death mercifully put an end to the scene. And through it all the soldiers and rabble mocked and jeered and tormented the wretched creature, even spitting upon him and brutally striking him as they passed by.

This is what they did when " there they crucified him."

There by the holy city at the place of a skull, surrounded by enemies, with only a few women and a single disciple looking on from a distance in silent sympathy, Jesus hung upon the cross. All the horror of this death burst upon him in flames of agony so fierce and terrible that in a few hours his life was consumed.

Yet no spot of guilt was upon him, no secret fault was in him, but he was wounded for our transgressions and for our iniquities he was bruised.

3. A Wonderful Prayer

A furious mob raged like an angry sea around the cross. There were the preachers and elders of the church, Pharisees in their ostentatious piety, Sadducees in their silken robes, Roman soldiers in their scarlet cloaks and glittering helmets, coarse people drawn by low curiosity, and the basest dregs of the slums of the city. These kept up a constant uproar of jeers and taunts and insults and violence against Jesus.

And in the midst of all what was he doing? Praying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

This is the sublimest prayer in the Bible and in all literature.

As an old violin that has long been under the magic touch of a master so that its very pores are full of the music of all the melodies and chords that have ever kindled and faded on its strings, can give forth no discordant sounds, but however rudely it may be played or roughly it may be handled yields only deep mellow notes, so Jesus was so full of the music of God that even on the cross under the maltreatment of his enemies he could utter no vindictive or bitter words, but calmly prayed for his tormentors.

Greater patience and forgiveness and love God himself cannot have.

How in the light of the breadth and splendor of this prayer our unforgiving spirit and hatred and spite shrivel into ugly meanness and guilt!

4. The Gambling Soldiers

The soldiers in charge of the crucifixion received the garments of Jesus as their perquisites. Wholly unconscious that they were fulfilling ancient Jewish prophecy (Ps. 22:18), they divided the outer garments into four parts, one for each soldier (John 19:23); and then, rattling

their dice in their brass helmets, they gambled for the inner garment which was woven without seam.

Thus unwittingly do men in their deepest wickedness fulfil far-off divine purposes.

How little did these soldiers realize the overwhelming significance of that death while they were busy getting a few shreds of this world's goods! Their eyes glittered with avarice as they watched the fall of the dice, but they were blind to the innocence and meekness and self-sacrifice of the Man on the Cross. Their tongues were noisy with bargaining and with blasphemy, but they had no word or sign of appreciation and sympathy and praise for the strange Sufferer.

Is it not even so today?

In all our cities and town in the very thick of their crowded streets and marts, churches and cathedrals lift their spires to heaven often crowned with a gilded cross. Within sight of this symbol of the crucified Christ men buy and sell and speculate and gamble and follow with fiercest competition the pursuit of this world's goods.

But how seldom do they lift their eyes to that symbol of the cross and temper their bargaining and restrain their blaspheming with thoughts of that holy Man? How much of our living is but noisy worldliness and selfishness in the presence of Christ?

Let the shadow of that cross fall upon our lives even in the market place or in the whirl of society and fashion and pleasure, to quiet and restrain them into holy praise and high endeavor.

5. An Unconscious Eulogy

A few of the taunts of that ungodly crowd were caught up into the gospels and have come down to us. Like everything that was said in derision of Jesus, they add to his honor and are so many crowns unwittingly placed on his head. " He saved others," they jeeringly exclaimed and doubtless thought this a famous jest.

But no grander eulogy could be pronounced even upon the Son of God. Unconsciously they placed on his brow his brightest crown.

" He saved others ": this he did whether they meant it in truth or in mockery. Many that had been healed of disease, many that had been forgiven of sin, many that had been comforted in sorrow, could have

testified that " he saved others." An increasing multitude down through the centuries, the millions that have felt his healing grace in the world today, and all the countless multitude of the redeemed in heaven, stand ready to bear witness to this blessed truth.

" Let him save others," or, " himself he cannot save " (Matthew 27:42).

They taunted him with impotency.

But their saying was not true in the sense they meant. He could have saved himself as far as mere power was concerned: one flash of his divinity would have laid them low.

But in a deeper sense than they knew their saying was true. Jesus could not save himself at the expense of his devotion to truth and duty, of his faithfulness to his Father and his love to a lost world.

No imagination can picture the consequences if on that eventful day Jesus had simply saved himself.

Saving self is the curse of this world: saving others is its redemption.

6. The Inscription

On the top of the cross over the head of Jesus was a board whitened with gypsum bearing in black letters the inscription, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Pilate wrote this inscription, doubtless as a deadly insult to the Jews, and when they saw it they were enraged and interceded with him to change it. But the Roman governor, having recovered some of his courage and probably with a grim sense of the ironic humor of the situation, met them with the refusal, " What I have written, I have written " (John 19:22).

Pilate wrote better than he knew.

He may have had some dim consciousness of the moral greatness if not of the supernatural character of Jesus, and thus wrote. More likely, however, it was written as a jest and insult; yet like many another word spoken in ridicule, it has turned out to be one of the great truths of the world.

It was written in three languages: in the official Latin, the current Greek, and the vernacular Aramaic—a fact which may explain the variations in its form in the gospels.

Everyone present could understand one or another of these languages.

The gospel is for all of every race and tongue and nation, and it must be put into all languages that all may hear it and none may miss its good news.

These three languages of the inscription on the cross have grown into more than eight hundred in which the whole gospel has been translated, and still they multiply as the gospel is carried into all parts and corners of the world.

7. The Final Scene

Passing by the deeply significant incident of the two thieves, we come to the final scene. Nature manifested mysterious sympathy with the Sufferer. The sun hid its glories from the awful spectacle and the earth quaked as if in mortal agony.

The outer darkness, however, was but a shadow of the deeper night that was closing in around the soul of Jesus.

At length with a deep cry of mortal agony he commended his spirit to his Father, his head fell forward and he was still. With wicked hands they had crucified him.

We cannot penetrate into the full meaning of this death.

Only in the presence of this cross can we know man: how deep is his sin and how great is his worth. Only in the presence of this cross can we know God: how inexorable is his justice and how infinite is his love.

The love of God in Christ, the worth of man, the sinfulness of earth and the holiness of heaven, all these were gloriously manifested when on that green hill so far away the dear Lord was crucified.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Do we know the site of Calvary?
2. In what ways may we be as thoughtless of the cross of Christ as the Roman soldiers?
3. Give other unconscious eulogies pronounced on Jesus.
4. In what ways is the inscription on the cross being fulfilled?
5. Why did Jesus die on the cross?

LESSON XI—JUNE 14

The Resurrection and the Ascension

Lesson: Luke 24.

Golden Text: It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Romans 8:34.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:50–58.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Our Living Lord.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Meaning of the Resurrection

Lesson Text: Luke 24:25–40, 50–51

25 And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

26 Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further.

29 And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them.

30 And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking *it* he gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they rehearsed the things *that happened* in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread.

36 And as they spake these things, he himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted. and supposed that they beheld a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your heart?

39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having.

40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

50 And he led them out until *they were* over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. On the Way to Emmaus.
2. As They Sat at Meat.
3. The Disciples in Jerusalem.
4. Jesus Appears.
5. The Ascension.

The resurrection of Jesus has been surrounded and buttressed with "many proofs" (Acts 1:3) that converted the disciples themselves out of their scepticism and scoffs at the first news of the event into men of masterful faith and has ever since convinced the Christian world of its reality.

It abides as the rock on which rests the central pillar of Christianity.

There are five recorded appearances of Jesus on the day of the resurrection: to Mary Magdalene, to the women returning from the sepulchre, to Simon Peter, to two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and in the evening to the eleven disciples, except Thomas. Our lesson records the fourth and fifth of these appearances. One of the two disciples was named Cleopas, and the other remains unknown.

1. On the Way to Emmaus

These two disciples on their way to Emmaus, a village up a steep rocky road seven or eight miles from Jerusalem, talked together excitedly of something that had happened. What were they talking about? An event had been reported that had created a tremendous sensation and was everywhere the talk of the hour. It crowded every other event out of their consciousness and it was still the subject of their excited conversation.

As they thus walked and talked, Jesus himself fell in and walked with them, but at first they did not recognize him, for "their eyes were holden."

They were not expecting him, he may have been dressed in unfamiliar garments, and besides we do not know how well acquainted they were with his appearance.

As he perceived the subject of their conversation he inquired, "What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk?" "And they stood still, looking sad."

They stopped at the question of the stranger and their troubled faces showed that the darkness of the crucifixion had not yet been wholly scattered by the reported event of the morning.

Cleopas then gave a summary of the life and death of Jesus, which is interesting as being woven of the faith and doubt, the hopes and fears, of the disciples on the day of the resurrection before the event was certainly confirmed. This was the state of mind of the disciples on the first day of the resurrection: still confused and bewildered by the death of Jesus, and amazed, or driven out of their senses, as the word means, by the report that he was risen.

They were not credulous enthusiasts, snatching at straws to confirm their faith or "wish-belief" as to this event, but were slow to believe and hard to convince, and it was out of this unfriendly temper of mind that there grew up an unshakable faith in this fact.

Their slowness to believe only rooted their faith and ours more deep and solid.

Jesus, having heard their narrative, broke into an exclamation of surprise and rebuke that they were so dull of perception and reluctant of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

These disciples were familiar with the Scriptures and doubtless thought they properly understood them, and yet there was a wealth of meaning in them that they had not found. They caught partial aspects and fragments of truth, but had missed some of the deepest and most vital roots of the Messiah's mission.

The Bible is still a book only partially explored. We have only touched its surface, and it contains treasures that wait for our study and understanding.

2. As They Sat at Meat

The three travelers were now approaching the village of Emmaus. The disciples had reached their destination, but the unknown Com-

panion made as though he would go further. But they constrained him to tarry with them.

If we may entertain angels unawares, never was this proverb so splendidly fulfilled as on this occasion.

As they sat at meat and he took and brake and blessed the bread, "Their eyes were opened, and they knew him." We do not know just how this recognition was brought about. There was some change in him or in them so that his form grew familiar and the Master was with them once more.

This recognition occurred in the midst of a common meal.

These disciples had doubtless seen him revealed on greater occasions, perhaps when he stilled the sea or spoke the Sermon on the Mount. But now they saw him as he broke bread. We do not see Jesus revealed only on great occasions or amidst the splendors of some great service in a stately church or cathedral. We do not need to stand on some mountain top or share in some spectacular service in order to see him.

He can reveal himself to us as well in the ordinary events and duties of life, and whether we eat or drink, buy or sell, pray or play, or whatsoever we do we may know him.

"And he vanished out of their sight." Jesus vanished—and there appears to have been something strange and mysterious in his bodily presence by which he could suddenly appear or disappear even through solid walls and locked doors—for he cannot be always equally present with us, or rather we cannot always be equally conscious of him.

Life has its rare days and rich moments when it is crowded with glorious inspiration and a new splendor lies upon the very grass; and then the vision vanishes and there must be many common days.

But whether the vision be present or absent we may always be with the Lord. "Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?" It surely did.

The richness of life is measured by the fulness and fineness of our feelings. The spirit of Jesus in our hearts tunes our souls so that all our powers vibrate in harmony, pouring forth the grand chords and sweet strains of life.

3. The Disciples in Jerusalem

We next find these two disciples back in Jerusalem " with the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them."

What were they talking about? The same marvelous event that had excited the two on the way to Emmaus. Before the two could speak, the other disciples greeted them with the exclamation, " The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

To this testimony the two disciples added their piece of news as " they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread." We have four accounts in the gospels and fuller information as to what happened on this eventful day of the resurrection. The women first at the tomb discovered that it was empty and went and told the disciples, and Peter and John came running and found the report of the women was true and then Jesus appeared in the garden to Mary and then to Peter. The day had been one of sensational discoveries and excitement that at first seemed to these disciples as an " idle tale " or nonsense as the word means.

They had no thought much less hope of a resurrection and their bewildered and sceptical minds made " vision " or an illusion or delusion as to this fact a psychological impossibility.

4. Jesus Appears

Suddenly in the midst of these wondering and excited and still doubting disciples Jesus appeared, " when the doors were shut " (John 20:19) and greeted them with his calm and assuring words, " Peace be unto you." But still " They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."

How hard it is for Jesus and for God himself to keep us from getting " affrighted " as he draws near to us!

And so " Fear not " was the first note of the angel's song at Bethlehem, and " Be not afraid " was the greeting with which Jesus approached the disciples as he came walking to them on the sea. The same word was addressed to them at the empty tomb of Jesus and often were they bidden to keep their faith and courage up in the presence of their Lord.

Sin has so thrown us out of harmony with God and the spiritual world that we are afraid when he approaches us and are scared at a ghost.

Jesus asked the disciples why they were so troubled and to assure them of his presence and reality he "showed them his hands and his feet." On this occasion, as also a week later in the same place when Thomas was present, he offered them solid material evidence that he was indeed their crucified Lord risen from the grave.

We know or should know that spirit is just as real as matter and when properly understood is far more so, as it is ultimate reality that gives birth to material manifestations and will endure "the wreck of matter." In fact matter is now known to be all the while evaporating or dissolving into energy, which appears to be a spiritual force related to our will. Yet the material is often a crutch on which we can lean and thereby are enabled to believe in spirit, and so the visible hands and feet of Jesus did put confidence into their feeble belief that he was indeed risen.

We may still crave material evidence of the spiritual world and even think that we would be better off if we could see and touch the body of our Lord. But in this we may be mistaken, and if we would only rightly appreciate and trust the evidence we have we would have a surer ground of faith.

Jesus himself said to Thomas, asking for this material evidence, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29.)

5. The Ascension

We now come to the closing scene in the life of Jesus; and it is worthy of its place as the conclusion and climax of this wonderful life.

Had the gospel been an invented story it would have been hard to bring it to an end. Christ was risen and his work was finished: what shall be done with him? He must not be permitted to die again, and he cannot remain.

The critical point in a story is the conclusion.

It must keep the interest up to the end and close at the highest point or it breaks down and fails.

How shall this Life, that opened with angel minstrelsy in the skies and was attended with many wonderful works and has just emerged

from the tomb and been crowned with the wonder and glory of the resurrection be brought to a worthy conclusion?

What novelist or poet or painter would dare attempt the task?

But give the pen to one of these humble followers of Jesus, untrained in the literary art, and he will write a conclusion that is a fitting culmination and climax to the whole story, and that, viewed simply as a piece of literature and work of art, is one of the most perfect and beautiful things in all the literature of the world. How simple and natural it is, how free from all art and effort, affectation and self-consciousness, how true to reality!

The man that wrote the story of the ascension of Jesus, we feel, did not invent it and never thought of inventing anything in connection with it.

Nobody imagined it, it was fact, the disciples simply related what they saw, and here it is:

"And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Who can gild that gold or throw a perfume on that bit of literature?

It is art surpassing art simply because the writer had no other purpose than to tell what happened on that day at Bethany when the risen Lord made his farewell appearance to his disciples and was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

He went back to his own place and his old home, whither we may all follow him.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How may we see Jesus at our daily meals?
2. In what sense does Jesus still walk the roads of earth?
3. Give Scripture proofs of the resurrection of Jesus.
4. Is belief in his resurrection of vital importance?
5. Why did Jesus ascend from the earth?
6. In what ways is he still present in the world?

LESSON XII—JUNE 21

The Sin of Causing Others to Stumble. (Temperance Lesson.)

Lesson: Romans 14:13–23.

Golden Text: It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth. Romans 14:21.

Devotional Reading: 1 John 4:7–13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Abstaining for the Sake of Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Liquor Traffic a Stumbling Block.

Lesson Text: Romans 14:13–23

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling.

14 I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men.

19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

20 Overthrow not for meat's sake the work of God. All things indeed are clean; howbeit it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21 It is good not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *to do anything* whereby thy brother stumbleth.

22 The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God. Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth.

23 But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***The Weak Brethren.***
2. ***The Strong Brethren.***
3. ***Another Principle for the Strong.***
4. ***Paul's Conclusion.***
5. ***Application to Our Problems.***

The question that Paul discusses in this passage is the right and expediency of eating meat that had been offered to idols. As meat was generally devoted to heathen gods before it was offered for sale in the markets, one could not eat anywhere without running the risk of eating such meat, and thus this question was thrust upon the Christian converts at every turn.

Some said it was right to eat such meat, for its devotion to an idol signified nothing to them, and others said it was wrong, for such eating sanctioned the worship.

Paul's simple solution of the case was that it was right to eat this meat, but as for himself if his eating would offend others, he would not do it.

The question itself, once so practical and burning, has long since passed away as a dead issue, but the principles underlying it are still alive and apply to many modern questions that perplex us.

1. The Weak Brethren

Paul, in writing to these Romans, where this question was so acute, addresses himself in turn to the brethren on both sides of the controversy. The opening question of the passage (in chapter 15:1 Paul uses the terms " strong " and " weak " to designate the two parties) is addressed to the weak brethren, or those that thought it was wrong to eat such meat and were offended at those that did eat. " But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother, or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? "

Those whose consciences would not allow them to eat this meat because of its idolatrous associations thought that those who did eat were wilful offenders, and they said so. They charged them with standing in with idolators and following heathen customs for the sake of personal gratification and popularity, and thereby defiling themselves with heathen worship and making themselves faithless to God and traitors to Christ.

Paul tells them that such judgment is wrong.

He has been showing them that there is room for difference of opinion on the subject and that those who eat are just as conscientious as those who do not. " He that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth

God thanks." "Nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." Those that conscientiously eat have as much right and must be given as much room and liberty for their practice as those that abstain from eating.

The trouble with the weak brethren was that they wanted to be the conscience not only for themselves, but for other people also; and this is still a common trouble with us.

Our beliefs and practices are not irresponsible acts which we can choose at our pleasure, but they are moral acts for which we are accountable. We have liberty, but not license; and we should choose and determine all our beliefs and practices under a solemn sense of our accountability at the judgment seat.

When a man persistently differs from us on a vital matter there is a point where we must leave him to his conscience and his God. Thus Paul pleads with the weak that they give room and liberty to the strong to exercise their conscience also.

2. The Strong Brethren

Paul now turns to the strong brethren and addresses them. "Let us not therefore judge one another: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling." We are first to turn our judgment upon ourselves and see that we are not using our liberty so as to injure another.

In keeping our own path open, we must not block up another's path.

Paul proceeds to work out the principle that should guide the strong in their relation to the weak. He is persuaded that nothing is unclean in itself. Evil never attaches to things, but our use of things.

This fact clears the meat that had been offered to idols of any inherent evil and vindicates those that wanted to eat such meat.

But Paul adds another principle that must also be considered: "save that to him who accounteth anything unclean, to him it is unclean."

Things are to us what we think they are.

If we think a thing is wrong, it is wrong for us, as it is never right for us to do what we believe to be wrong. This principle justified those

that abstained from meat because they believed it was wrong to eat it.

And now Paul contends that the strong brother should yield the practice of his principle in favor of the principle of the weak brother.

"For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love." The strong brother had an abstract or theoretical right to maintain his principle of liberty and eat what he thought was good, but not if in so doing he violated the higher principle of love and destroyed a weak brother. The strong brother might not be able to eat without tempting the weak brother to eat and thereby leading him to do wrong.

Paul's fundamental principle then is, that, in exercising our own rights we are bound to consider their effects upon others.

If things that are right for us are wrong for others and our doing them may offend the consciences of others and may lead them into doing wrong, then Christian love should constrain us to yield our liberty for the sake of their life.

If we insist upon our rights at the expense of others' good, we violate a higher principle than our rights and turn our good into evil.

3. Another Principle for the Strong

Paul now lays down another principle that the strong should not forget. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Eating this meat was not a duty: if it were, it could not be yielded, but would have to be done.

The principle Paul is urging applies only to rights and not to duties.

Rights are things that we may yield to others, but duties are things that must be done and we have no right to yield. The eating and drinking with which Paul was dealing were rights which these strong brethren could justly claim and exercise; but they were only rights and therefore they could give them up; they were not obligations that entered into the essence of the kingdom.

On the other hand the kingdom is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit: these things rise far above rights into duties which

must be exercised and no one can relax them in the least degree for the sake of others.

We may be as plastic and flexible as we please with our rights and give them away freely, but we should be unyielding and rigid with our duties and hold to them without shadow of turning.

Some people are very exacting and pugnacious and touchy about their rights, but very soft and supple and slippery about their duties. We should reverse this and have a stiff spinal column of duty and wear a soft covering of rights.

Paul here enunciates a grand principle that goes beyond the case in hand and applies to all our religious life.

The kingdom is not eating and drinking; neither is it rites and ceremonies, Bible and baptism, creed and church, preaching and profession, but it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

It is not outer form but inner spirit and life, and "he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men."

4. Paul's Conclusion

Paul now draws his conclusion. "So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another." Particular kinds of food may be good and we may have the right to use them, but it is not good to use them when by so doing we do harm to others. Paul elsewhere (1 Cor. 8:13) declares that "if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble."

Thus he starts out by vindicating the right of the strong to use their liberty and then he concludes by urging them to yield their liberty for the sake of the weak; and the man that claimed the widest liberty for others, practiced the narrowest self-denial himself.

Paul was always looking out for the weaker man and considering his interests.

"We that are strong," he kept saying, "ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1.) In choosing our privileges and pleasures and even in exercising our rights we ought to

consider what effect our course will have on others and avoid doing anything that will harm them, even when it costs us some sacrifice of our own desires and rights.

This principle comes to its loftiest expression in the cross of Christ.

" For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich " (2 Cor. 8:9.) Even he " who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him " (Phil. 2:6–9). Thus Christ himself in his divine glory did not hold on to and exercise that glory when it came into competition with his love for and desire to save men, but freely threw it aside and counted it as naught that he might come down to their level and lift them up to his height.

If our Lord Jesus surrendered such absolute right and infinite glory for our sakes, what should we not be willing to sacrifice for his sake and for the sake of his and our brethren?

5. Application to Our Problems

Paul nobly used this principle to settle a vexed question in his day, and, rightly used, it will settle many difficult questions that confront Christians in our complex modern civilization. There are social customs and fashions, amusements and pleasures and places, that may be harmless to us, but if their general effect is evil and they tend to drag down and destroy others, we are bound to consider whether we ought not to abstain from them for the sake of others.

When our good becomes other people's evil it is time to give it up.

The application of this principle to the temperance question is pertinent and close. Even if it be admitted that the use of wine and other intoxicants is not personally injurious and dangerous, it will not be claimed that such use is a duty that cannot be escaped (unless prescribed

by a physician.) At the best it ranks among personal privileges and comforts.

But it is not a privilege and comfort with many, but it is their slavery and misery and ruin.

The intoxicating cup is pouring a stream of fire into the blood of the race that is burning up its manhood body and soul. Whoever uses this cup, however harmlessly to himself, must consider whether he is not thereby enticing others to their ruin, and putting himself in guilty complicity with this awful evil.

If it is objected that prohibition is interfering with the rights of others, we reply that in the same way we interfere with many other ordinary privileges and rights.

We do not count smoking a social evil that we seek to prevent by law, but it was absolutely forbidden on board the Graf Zeppelin buoyed up by highly explosive hydrogen gas, and when a passenger was found to have used it on the return voyage across the Atlantic, the captain's face "froze white," we read, and the guilty passenger was put under surveillance and ostracised during the rest of the trip.

Society has a right to protect the safety of its vast balloon. And we ought to obey its law.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Explain in some detail just what this question about eating meat in Paul's day was.
2. Who represent the "weak" and who the "strong" today?
3. Name some things Christians may well sacrifice today for the sake of others.
4. Show how the principle of mutual social welfare applies to prohibition.
5. Is prohibition working in a reasonable degree?

LESSON XIII—JUNE 28

Review: Jesus the World's Saviour: Suffering and Sovereignty

Golden Text: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16.

The second Quarter has covered the life of Jesus as recorded by Luke from near the middle to the end of his ministry and thereby has taken us through many of its great scenes and sayings. We now gather them into a condensed view.

1. Jesus Teaches Humility

We see Jesus at a fashionable dinner party, illustrating the fact that he moved in and mingled with all classes and conditions of people, yet kept himself unstained. A dropsical man was present and Jesus quickly picked him out as the object of his sympathy and thereby gave offense to the Pharisees who were present.

Jesus put the case before them in such a light that they were silenced and then he healed the afflicted man.

He then proceeded to give some points to his critics on good table manners and went on to give warning and advice on the ostentatious display and the proper expenditure of wealth, matters that are very much in evidence in our modern life.

The lesson closes with a later incident in the life of Jesus in which he received babes and evaluated them.

2. The Prodigal Son

The Prodigal Son is commonly regarded as the most comprehensive and beautiful parable spoken by Jesus as it sweeps the whole circle of redemption from the fall to the restoration of man. It opens in the home where the younger son develops unrest and demands his portion of property, which is granted to him and then we witness a rapid degeneration into degradation as he feeds swine and eats the same husks with them. The tide then turns and we see him returning through reflection and resolution in penitence to restoration in his father's home.

It is a vivid picture of the course of human sin and the process by which the sinner may come back and be restored.

3. The Rich Man and Lazarus

In another great parable we see men in widely contrasted social conditions and how they reacted to them and the end of their lives. The rich man lived in ease and luxury unmindful of any social obligations and the beggar lay unheeded at his gate. Their death and funerals corresponded with their lives. Then the veil is parted and we are given a glimpse into the other world where these men appear in reversed relations. The rich man is now unspeakably poor and the poor man exceedingly rich. A remarkable conversation takes place between them, in which the former rich man shows he is unchanged in his moral nature and he makes a request which cannot be granted. Dives now wants a messenger from the dead sent to give warning to his brothers, but this is shown to be impossible and would be useless.

We do not need spirit rappings and ghosts to give us proper instruction and warning, for we have these in Moses and especially in Christ.

4. How to Pray

Men ought always to pray and most men do pray in some way, but we need instruction as to how to pray in the right way. The little parable of the Unjust Judge conveys the lesson that prayer should be so sincere and earnest that it will not easily be discouraged and cease, but will persist until God gives some answer that will be accepted.

Contrasted prayers are shown in the instances of the proud Pharisee and the humble publican.

The one uttered a soliloquy in which he complimented and congratulated himself, and the other smote his breast and with downcast eyes pleaded for mercy. Jesus passed upon these two prayers the inevitable judgment that the humble publican went down to his house justified and leaves us to pass our judgment on the Pharisee

We may pray in the spirit of the Pharisee or of the publican as we choose to do and with the same result.

5. Jesus in the Home of Zacchæus

Jericho was thronged with sightseers seeking a glimpse of the Nazarene prophet as he was passing through the town, and of all the men in the crowd the two whose names have come down to us and who apparently had the least chance of seeing the prophet were a blind beggar and an unpopular and hated tax collector.

Yet the despised and ostracised publican got the best view of Jesus that day.

He did this by turning his short stature into a means of getting ahead of the throng and up into a tree where he could look down on the passing prophet. Jesus startled Zacchæus and scandalized the crowd by stopping at the tree and inviting the man perched there to come down as he would go home with him.

The last may be first.

6. The Parable of the Pounds

The groundwork of this parable is framed out of the political situation of the time. A nobleman, who represents Jesus himself in the parable, about to go on a journey into a far country calls his servants and distributes unto them trusts in the form of pounds.

The pounds represent our personal endowments and possessions which are intrusted to us to use in the service of our Lord.

They each receive one pound each: In the Parable of the Talents they each received a different number, (Matt. 25:14–18). not that all are equal in their gifts but that all receive something and are equal in responsibility. When the nobleman was gone these servants rejected him, as did the Jews with their Messiah. In due time the lord returned and distributed rewards. They had gained different amounts by their trading, but one of them had gained nothing and only returned the original pound which he had not used and which was forthwith taken from him.

The parable is a picture of our world with our gifts and the different ways in which we use them with the rewards we shall receive proportioned to the profits we have gained.

7. Jesus Enters Jerusalem as King

The triumphal entry was a great day in the life of Jesus and a picture of the way he is still passing through the world. From Bethany a procession of his followers conducted him on a colt up the slope of the Mount of Olives, at the summit of which at the sight of the unfaithful city Jesus burst into tears.

The procession then passed down into the Kedron valley and up into the city and on into the temple area, where Jesus gazed upon the shocking scene of trading that was going on in offerings and in money changing. He denounced the noisy bargainers and drove them out.

Of course there were critics present, the inevitable Pharisees, and they especially found fault with the singing children, but Jesus rebuked them and said a good word in praise of children.

In the evening he went back to Bethany and nothing measurable came of the great day.

The kingdom of heaven does not come with observation, with street processions and banners, noise and excitement, but quietly as the day dawns.

8. Jesus Preparing for the End

The conspiracy of death was now closing in around Jesus and he gathered his disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem for quiet confidential table talk and the institution of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper that grew out of the Passover, the new evolving out of the old.

Preparation preceded the meeting and then as they were eating Jesus startled the little company with the announcement of his approaching betrayal. They were horrified, but one of them was guilty of this baseness. Jesus then took the bread and the cup of the old feast and transmuted them into the higher use of the new ordinance. They are common and frail elements, but they have outlasted all the vicissitudes of the centuries and are more imperishable than Egyptian pyramid and Roman arch.

The emblems are rich in ideas and memories and are still the bread of life to the soul. The ordinance also has in it a gleam of prophecy and binds Christ's first with his final coming.

It has not yet come to its perfect blossom, and its ripe fruit and full significance are yet to be fulfilled.

9. Jesus in Gethsemane

Gethsemane, "The Oil Press," is rightly named, and is the world's Garden of Sorrow pressed from the soul of Jesus. He took with him the inner circle of the three intimate disciples that he might have their nearer presence and sympathy. A wonderful prayer came from him in which he faltered for a moment before the bitter cup of the cross and then quickly won the victory of complete submission. In mysterious agony drops of blood exuded from his brow and he was undergoing an experience into which we cannot enter.

The victory of the cross was now won and he came forth strong and calm and met his betrayer and enemies at the garden gate.

10. Jesus Crucified

At the Place of a Skull on that "green hill far away" the dear Lord was crucified. The name of the place was significant as it vividly suggested the condition to which man has been reduced in his sin. The cross was a rude instrument of execution that combined all the foreshadowings of prophecy as to the Messiah's death and the heathen world had invented it and armed it with almost preternatural powers of inflicting suffering.

Hanging upon this cross, with a rough rabble insulting and striking him, Jesus uttered a marvelous prayer of forgiveness, while soldiers gambled over his clothes. Unconscious eulogies were uttered on this occasion, and one of them has been caught up and preserved for us in this passage. The inscription was a further undesigned eulogy and proclaimed him king in the current languages of the day that all might understand. These three have now multiplied into more than eight hundred and still new translations are being made.

At length the final scene closed the tragedy and the price of our redemption was paid in full. In a sense, when rightly understood, "Jesus paid it all."

11. The Resurrection and Ascension

The morning of the third day after the resurrection something happened in Jerusalem that threw the disciples into a state of excitement and bewilderment that has not yet wholly subsided in the world. Two disciples were on the way to the village of Emmaus when a stranger

fell in with them and stopped with them for the evening meal and in the breaking of bread was revealed to them as their risen Lord. Later in the evening they joined the disciples in a room in the city and Jesus appeared in their midst, passing in through closed doors. In all he appeared five times on this first day and ten or eleven times during the forty days before his ascension.

The ascension took place at Bethany and is described in simple yet eloquent words that could not have been invented by any literary artist and are proof that the unlettered disciple that wrote them was not thinking of inventing anything but simply told what he had seen.

Jesus ascended because it was better that he should go and administer his kingdom from his heavenly throne universally in the world.

12. The Sin of Causing Others to Stumble

Paul discussed the vexed question of whether Christians should eat the meat that had been offered to idols and was then exposed for sale in the public markets, by showing that while the use of such meat was right for those whose consciences were not offended by it, yet such "strong" brethren should abstain from it so as not to offend and lead astray the "weak brethren" who thought such use was wrong.

This principle will help us in solving many of our social problems and applies very directly to total abstinence and prohibition.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Can you give a combined picture of all these lessons in their order?
2. Why did Jesus live his life on earth?
3. In what sense can we reproduce his life in our lives?

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD QUARTER

Christianity has now come to its critical hour. Its Christ has done his work on earth and gone.

The critical question now is, How will his cause and kingdom get along without his personal presence?

Will the hands of these human disciples be strong enough to hold the fabric of the new kingdom together and keep it on its foundation and build it so that it will stand through the ages? Will the story of the life of Jesus turn out to be only " a sweet Galilean vision " which will now quickly fade and leave no trace that can be discovered under the dust of the centuries? Or will Christianity spread from Jerusalem and start out on a victorious march to the ends of the earth?

This question is answered in the Book of Acts and the remaining books of the New Testament.

The Acts of the Apostles is the continuation of the Four Gospels and carries on the mission of Jesus by his apostles. It is the Fifth Gospel or the Fifth Volume of the Life of Christ.

It is a stirring story.

It starts out splendidly at Pentecost with marvelous success and promise, and then quickly encounters opposition and persecution. Dark and dangerous days follow. But the fires of persecution only scatter sparks and flames and start new centers of Christian faith and fervor at widely separated and distant points. Christianity is a fire that cannot be confined and will burn its way out to the great rim of the Roman Empire and on to the utmost frontiers of the world.

External obstructions are bravely overcome, but more insidious and dangerous internal difficulties and threatened divisions arise.

The epochal question of the relation of Christianity to Judaism, of the old faith to the new, quickly arose and shook the church from center to circumference.

Two councils settled this issue, and then the faith thus set free, unloosed from its Judean crag, spread its wings for its world flight.

It is an inspiring spectacle to witness these conflicts and triumphs and this grand march!

It is full of picturesque scenes, critical epochs, dramatic moments, masterful personalities, and splendid heroisms and martyrdoms, unsurpassed if equaled in any other period of human history.

What book can compare with the Acts in vital importance and thrilling interest? It is one of the most stirring stories as it is one of the most important books in the Bible.

In the following studies in the spread of Christianity only selected points and scenes can be presented, and the endeavor will be to paint the picture with some life and color so as to make it realistically vivid and practical.

THIRD QUARTER

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

STUDIES IN THE ACTS, THE EPISTLES, AND THE REVELATION

(First Half of a Six-months' Course)

Aim: To lead the pupil to an understanding of primitive Christianity, and to beget in him the desire and purpose to live the Christian life and to win others to faith in the Lord Jesus.

LESSON I—JULY 5

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Lesson: Acts 1:6–14; 2:1–47.

Golden Text: Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the utter most part of the earth. Acts 1:8.

Devotional Reading: John 16:7–14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Coming of New Power.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Empowered for a World Task.

Lesson Text: Acts 1:6–9; 2:1–8

6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.

8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

1 And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilæans?

8 And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. Secret Things.
2. Witnesses.
3. Human Conditions.
4. Divine Manifestation.
5. Plenitude of Power.

The introduction to this book is a link or bridge connecting Luke's "former treatise" or Gospel with the Acts which is Luke's continuation of the gospel history, carrying it out of Judaism and Palestine into the universal gospel in the Gentile world. The first nine verses relate events that occurred during the forty days intervening between the resurrection and the ascension, and the time referred to in the opening verse of our lesson "when they were come together," cannot be definitely located.

1. Secret Things

On one occasion in the last days the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" This question might have been the largest and noblest they could have put, but their narrow minds contracted and degraded it into the smallest and lowest.

"Kingdom" meant very different things to the disciples and to Jesus: they meant by it a splendid material kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital and mistress of the world, after the fashion of Rome, with themselves in the chief offices; he meant by it a spiritual kingdom of righteousness and peace in the hearts of men with himself as servant of all.

They never could break through their Jewish nationalism and materialism into Christ's breadth and spirituality; and here, after three years of training, just before they were to be sent out to spread the kingdom abroad, they relapsed into Jewish grossness and selfishness.

It was very discouraging.

But Jesus was patient and tender with them and gave them a reply marked with marvelous wisdom. He did not too abruptly shatter their dream, but turned their minds off from it with the large principle that times or seasons were hidden from them.

There are some things that God must not tell us.

Too much light blinds the eye; too much knowledge would paralyze us and disorganize the world. It is a mercy to us that the future is mostly curtained from our view.

Persistent prying into times or seasons is harmful and sinful, and secret things are wisely left with God.

Yet this question about the time of the coming of Christ in his kingdom has persisted and troubled the church down to this day. Still there are those who indulge in speculations and dreams and calculate the time of this event and at intervals announce its exact date, and give themselves and others no little trouble.

It is a vain business and we had better let this matter alone.

Jesus, however, did plainly intimate that the coming of the kingdom was yet far in the future as the disciples were to receive power and carry the gospel to the " uttermost part of the earth."

This work is not yet done.

2. Witnesses

Having deflected their minds off from their materialistic ambition, Jesus now led their thoughts back to the spiritual kingdom in which the power of the Holy Spirit would come upon them and to their mission as witnesses.

Instead of speculating about visionary matters, he gave them something practical to do, and this is generally the cure for fanciful dreaming.

They were to begin at Jerusalem and widen their work out into " Judea and Samaria " (home missions) and carry it across all borders (foreign missions) until it belted the globe and filled the uttermost ends of the earth with the gospel message and kingdom.

Already the risen Christ gives commands that compass the world and leave no bit of earth or single soul outside of his gracious salvation.

Standing inside that little country of Palestine he was looking out over all the world. He was no provincial Jew or narrow nationalist or parochial schoolmaster, but a universal Teacher and world Saviour overleaping all horizons. Christianity is no racial religion, it refuses to stop at any mountain range or ocean shore or red or blue line on the map, but like the atmosphere it overflows all boundaries and obstructions and must envelope the globe.

The gospel is the true solvent of world problems, of social reconstruction and world unity, leavening the whole mass of the world by leavening each individual particle with new life. It is no paper program but a rock foundation deep and broad enough on which to rear a new world.

It is our mission to lay this foundation and build this structure, beginning at home and carrying it to the uttermost part of the earth.

The ascension fittingly closed all the instructions of Jesus and he now committed his work to his disciples and went back to heaven to administer his kingdom universally in the world by the presence and power of his Spirit.

3. Human Conditions

Our lesson now passes on to the day of Pentecost and we again look in upon this wonderful scene.

The time was propitious, for the harvest feast drew an immense multitude of people who thus furnished a compact mass and rich soil in which to sow the gospel and who, in turn, became winged seeds to waft it out over the world.

On this day the disciples were " all together in one place."

There were not many of them, but they were all there.

Not one of the church was absent to leave a gap in the little audience, and the circuit was continuous and complete, ready for the flash of power from above.

There is power in compactness.

Every vacant seat in the church is a break and leakage in the current of spiritual energy.

The disciples were not only in one place, but they were " all together," or " with one accord," the Greek word meaning something more than mere physical proximity and including spiritual sympathy.

They were all blended into unity of mind and heart.

There were no factions, strifes and strained relations among these church members to divide and scatter spiritual power. The Spirit cannot travel along a broken circuit, but must have continuous minds and hearts.

What was the secret of this mother church of all Christendom that stands to this day as the greatest church in spiritual power and fruitfulness?

It was not numbers, for it had only a hundred and twenty members, which today would constitute what would be regarded as a small and unimportant church. It had no scarlet-cushioned pews and stained-glass windows, in fact it had no building at all. It had no money in its treasury and did not even have a treasurer. It had no choir and pipe organ, and no settled or salaried pastor. It had no elders, deacons, trustees, or Sunday school or missionary societies, and no formal or informal organization whatever. There was almost nothing there that we would call a church, yet never has there been such a church since.

What did it have? It had unanimity; one hundred and twenty souls fused into unity with one great thought and passion.

It was simply an open channel free from human clogs through which the Spirit of God could flow in unobstructed fulness, and such a church will ever be flooded and drenched with Pentecostal power.

4. Divine Manifestation

The human conditions were ready and now the divine manifestation came; the Spirit found the continuous circuit and flashed forth in power.

This coming of the Spirit was mediated in and through physical signs, for God ever uses material crutches to support spiritual infirmities.

The wind came as a fitting symbol of the Spirit's presence and power.

And what better symbol of power than wind. Ordinarily the air lies around us invisible and impalpable, so soft and still it does not rustle a leaf or fret an infant's cheek; but let the sun play upon it and wake its slumbering power, and it begins to blow in breezes and to gather into a storm and at length it levels forests and lashes the sea and overwhelms all human might. So may the Holy Spirit lie around us unfelt and we may think the great Spirit of the universe is dead; but when we are in the right condition he gathers his energies together and sweeps down upon us in a tide of power before which we are tossed as leaves in a storm.

Tongues of flame also symbolized the Spirit.

Fire as it sifts down so silently in the soft sunshine does not seem to have much energy, but it makes the whole earth bud and blossom, and as it is condensed into the lightning bolt or in the glowing furnace it has enormous explosive and motor power, driving locomotives and steamships and turning all the wheels of our vast industrial system.

The truths of Scripture are condensed spirit as coal is condensed sunshine.

When these are kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit they develop their hidden energy. Suddenly they may begin to blaze and reveal their meaning. Our sins burn us. Spiritual things that seemed so shadowy and evanescent become intensely real and we see them solid. It is as though a new world were suddenly opened and we saw God! His love is shed abroad in our hearts and we are filled with his fulness.

This effect of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has been reproduced down through all the Christian centuries.

Sometimes it bursts out in special times and countries, as in the Wesleyan revival in England and the early revivals in this country or more recently in our own day; and often it visits congregations met for special prayer in a revival that burns its way through the church and sets the whole city or community on fire.

It may be kindled at any time in our own souls and make our hearts burn within us as we have a fresh experience of spiritual truth and power.

5. Plenitude of Power

Corresponding with this divine manifestation were appropriate human results. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to have an intense realization of spiritual realities and live under their grand inspiration.

When the human spirit is tuned into harmony with the divine Spirit, it is filled with the fulness of God and makes one music with him. This fulness filled them all, it was everybody's blessing.

Here at last is something of which there is enough for us all.

It is surprising how few things are poured out upon us all, for material goods are relatively scarce and are generally distributed with great and often frightful inequality and with much apparent favoritism. There are not enough houses or clothes or shoes or sugar to go around and give all the people in the world enough to meet their ordinary needs.

But one thing all human beings must have, breath, air; and so God has poured an infinite sea of it around the globe in which all flesh breathes.

With equal copiousness and freeness has he provided for our spiritual life and there is enough of this holy breath to fill all souls, as there is enough air to fill all lungs.

It is the measure of spirit we have that measures our rank on the scale of life. As more and more spirit is poured into a man it saturates his flesh and streams through it, and under its purifying and spiritualizing power the flesh grows thinner and more transparent until it seems melted away and the man is all spirit.

Have we not seen saints whose flesh was a translucent veil through which the spirit streamed and shone almost in a flood of glory?

All the members of this church were filled with the spirit, for this gift is no special privilege of a few but may be the common possession of all. And being filled with the Spirit they began to speak, for life must express itself as a tree must blossom, and the Christian, having received, must begin to give.

God, having spoken to us, does not mean that we should keep silent.

The first revival set men talking, and the gospel must still be, not only preached, but also talked.

They spoke with other tongues. An extraordinary occasion demanded an extraordinary gift, whatever its nature, and the need having passed away the gift passed with it.

Yet the church still has the power of tongues. Lexicon and grammar do now what the Spirit did then.

Missionaries speak in every important language on the globe; and we, in sending or supporting them, speak through them in other tongues and reduplicate Pentecost in every quarter of the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are we so curious about future things?
2. Why does the divine gospel need human witnesses?
3. What was the day of Pentecost?
4. Can we fulfil these same conditions of divine manifestation?
5. What is the great need of the church today?

LESSON II—JULY 12

The Preaching of the Apostles

Lesson: Acts 3:1–4:31; 1 Corinthians 1:21–25.

Golden Text: We must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29.

Devotional Reading: Romans 10:8–15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Two Brave Preachers.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Apostolic Preaching.

Lesson Text: Acts 4:1–14

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,

2 Being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now eventide.

4 But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;

6 And Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them. Ye rulers of the people, and elders,

9 If we this day are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole;

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner.

12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

13 Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

1. ***The Risen Jesus Proclaimed.***
2. ***A Persistent Gospel.***
3. ***Before the Court.***
4. ***Peter's Defense.***
5. ***They Took Knowledge of Them.***

The morning after Pentecost we find Peter and John quietly going up into the temple to pray. Excitement had subsided into the ordinary course of life.

Apparently these disciples had not realized that the temple had fulfilled its purpose and passed and they still worshiped in the old place according to the old form.

But as they were going up the temple steps an event happened that had far-reaching consequences. A crippled beggar accosted them and asked for alms and got something better than he had ever dreamed of.

Instead of gold he got grace; instead of money he got the power of making money.

He was healed and placed upon his own feet, a restored personality and that was better than any amount of material gifts. The miracle began to attract a crowd and Peter began to preach to them in a straight sermon in which he boldly charged them with having " killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."

The sermon went on to a practical application in which Peter called upon the people to repent and have their sins blotted out. At this point occurred the interruption which is described in our lesson.

1. The Risen Jesus Proclaimed

The sermon was interrupted by the sudden appearance of priests, Sadducees and temple police who were quick to scent danger and rushed to see what the excitement was. They soon discovered the cause and were " sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

The consternation of these priests and police is pathetic.

They thought they had stopped this whole trouble root and branch by crucifying Jesus. Had they not heard his last expiring cry and seen him safely sealed in his tomb? And were not soldiers placed on guard before it to see that he would never get out? What more was there to fear from him? Yet here was the whole matter broken out afresh with intensified power in the very temple itself!

The hated name of Jesus was back upon them in a new and more terrible form as one risen from the dead.

A living Jesus they could catch and crucify, but a risen Jesus they could no more arrest and kill than they could seize and imprison the wind or sabre the sunlight into pieces.

Men have often thought they had ended the gospel, Voltaire said he would end it himself, but the risen Jesus constantly reappears and outruns all human devices to deny and thwart his presence and power and will yet draw all the ends of the earth unto himself.

The priests were alarmed because the risen Jesus was proclaimed to the people.

They thought if this thing were only kept from the people, it would die of itself. They were afraid to trust the people and sought to throw around them their ecclesiastical protection and dictatorship. Ecclesiastics have often been suspicious of the people and wanted to keep their consciences for them.

Christ is for the people, and any priest or church that attempts to build a fence between the Shepherd and his flock shall incur his displeasure.

No wonder, then, the priests and police were sore troubled over this ominous turn of affairs.

What did they do? "They laid hands on them, and put them in ward." They seized the preachers and hurried them off to jail. They believed in the good old plan that might makes right.

They believed that force can put down faith, that a policeman's club can quiet conscience, and that a prison is a proper and effective way of stopping preaching.

This theory has not wholly disappeared from the world, though it assumes among us more subtle forms. The instinct is strong in us, when we cannot convince a man by reason, to get at him by some shorter and more effective way. If we cannot close his mouth perhaps we can break his head or his heart or throw him out of his pulpit. The apostles started to pray, but went to prison.

Piety may still lead to persecution, and our purest purposes sometimes end in disappointment and apparent disaster.

2. *A Persistent Gospel*

Had the priests been right in their theory and practice, the gospel would have stopped at this point and would have been heard of no more. But the narrative has a persistent way of running right on as though no particle of obstruction had been put in its path.

On the contrary, it immediately announces results in larger terms than ever before.

"But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." The women are not yet counted in this narrative, but presently they were and they are being counted today and are a great host.

The preachers were put in prison, but their preaching was believed and was more effective than ever.

The priests for a moment seemed to be triumphant, but presently they were discomfited as it appeared they had only multiplied and scattered the heresy they had tried to stop. The policemen could lock up the Galilean preachers, but they could not lock up the gospel they preached; their words were now everywhere loose and free and flying among the people and could no more be corralled than could an innumerable flock of birds or swarm of bees.

The truth cannot be caught and killed, and force and fire and blood cannot stop it.

It has a way of escaping, like air, through all crevices, and, like light, it can penetrate through solid transparent walls. The winds of persecution only kindle its fire into intenser flames and scatter its burning embers far and wide. Persecution was a powerful agency in spreading the gospel and it became a proverb that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

Flame and sword could not stop the Reformation, but only intensified and spread it. The bones of Wyclif, dug up and burnt to ashes, were cast into the Avon; on the Avon they floated down into the broader Severn, and in the Severn out into the boundless sea; and thus they fertilized the world.

Opposition drives convictions deeper into men's souls and makes them more earnest and masterful. Pent-up power at last bursts its

confinement and irresistibly leaps into liberty. If we cannot show that ideas are erroneous and arrest them by reason, we cannot stop them at all. Opposing them by authority will only intensify and spread them.

The net result of such efforts may be to turn one hundred and twenty believers into three thousand and three thousand into five thousand.

If we encounter persecution on our way, if our best purposes and endeavors run into disappointment and disaster, we may turn such hindrances into helps so that we shall believe more intensely and preach more effectively. Out of such apparent defeats may come our grandest victories.

3. Before the Court

The night passed and in the morning the Sanhedrin assembled with the arrested Galileans before them for trial. Rulers, elders and scribes, Annas and Caiaphas, were all there.

These names have a familiar appearance and sound; we have met them before.

They carry us back to that fatal night when Jesus was rushed through the forms of a trial and hurried on to the cross. It must have been with much solicitude and alarm that these men were called together on substantially the same business. The name of Jesus haunted them also and rose upon them this morning as a disquieting spectre.

Here was a ghost that would not down.

So the name of Jesus had the same enemies after his resurrection as before it, and the gospel has the same enemies and opposition from age to age. Infidelity has no new thing to say against Christianity, for it uttered all its objections long ago.

We may expect our old temptations to come back upon us. Annas and Caiaphas, having tried us once, will try us again. The same sin, that so easily beset us before conversion, will beset us after the new birth; day after day we must meet the same accusers and fight the same battle.

The Sanhedrin opened the trial with the question: " By what power, or in what name, have ye done this? "

They admitted that something had been done that called for explanation.

The healed beggar before them was a fact of solid flesh that would not vanish before their scepticism and had to be accounted for.

Christianity has facts that will not melt into myths and must be explained.

The question of the Sanhedrin was good in its form, but everything depended on its purport and spirit. If they were sincerely seeking the truth, they were sure to find it; but if they were only seeking to entrap the apostles, they were setting a snare for their own feet.

4. Peter's Defense

Peter stood forth as spokesman, and we watch him closely to see how he behaves in the presence of the august court. Once before he stood near these judges as he gathered with servants around the fire in the court of the high priest's palace on the night of the Master's trial and appears to have made merry with them as they jested about the Nazarene and taunted him with being one of his followers.

He did not behave well on that occasion, but turned coward and falsely swore he did not know Jesus and did not know what they were talking about. But Peter is a different man now and makes a truthful and brave speech. He was following Jesus afar off that night, but now he is so close to him that he is, in a sense, identified with him. He is "filled with the Holy Ghost."

This divine possession and passion makes any man strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Peter opens his speech by courteously addressing his judges and then adroitly states his case: "If we this day are examined concerning the good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole."

It was said of Daniel Webster that his simple statement of a case was in itself its best argument and demonstration.

This untrained fisherman showed himself a master of the art of persuasion in stating his case.

Surely the promise was being fulfilled, " Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak " (Matt. 10:19.) Peter set the act for which he and his fellow disciples were being tried before his judges in its true character as " a good deed " and declared that the man stood before them whole in the name of Jesus Christ, " whom ye crucified."

Never was there a more dramatic scene.

These judges were the very men that had sent Jesus to his cross and they sat there with their robes stained with his blood. Then the preacher rolled upon his judges a stone out of their own Scriptures by quoting the stone that was set at naught " of you the builders " and yet was made the head of the corner.

The Jews missed their most splendid opportunity in not seeing in Jesus the star man of their race, their own promised Messiah and Saviour of the world.

Finally Peter loosed the gospel from this particular instance of his text and gave it universal sweep in the grand declaration, " And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

5. They Took Knowledge of Them

The effect of this sermon was great beyond expectation. When these judges beheld the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, " they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." The sight of the healed man also sealed their lips so that " they could say nothing against it."

This is ever the best evidence of our Christian faith: such an impression on others that they will see that we have been with Jesus.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. In what sense does Jesus still refuse to stay in his grave?
2. In what ways are men trying to stop the gospel today?
3. Is the gospel on trial today before the court of the world?
4. What evidences does Christianity give for itself today?
5. How can we best defend the gospel?

LESSON III—JULY 19

Social Service in the Early Church

Lesson: Acts 4:32–35; 6:1–7; 9:36–39; 2 Corinthians 9:1–15.

Golden Text: He himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 112:5–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Christians Sharing with Others.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Generosity of the Early Christians.

Lesson Text: Acts 4:32–35; 6:1–4; 2 Corinthians 9:1–7

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one *of them* said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

1 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them.

3 But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared:

4 Lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence.

5 I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

6 But this *I say,* He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 *Let* each man *do* according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *An Experiment in Communism.*
2. *Power of the Resurrection.*
3. *Dangers of Prosperity.*
4. *Division of Labor.*
5. *Ministering to the Saints.*
6. *Sowing and Reaping.*

Pentecost has passed, persecution for the time being has quieted down, and now the church with its large number of new members, five thousand men besides women and children, enters upon the work of getting organized and settling its internal problems.

This is a period of difficulty and danger, and these difficulties quickly appear.

1. An Experiment in Communism

We are presented with an experiment in communism that is an interesting study in this form of government.

The multitude of believers were fused into one soul, melted and merged with a common passion of sympathy and love.

At length under this impulse they were moved to cast their goods into a common lot or treasury. No one with few exceptions claimed to own anything as his individual possession, but all things were held in common. Real estate was sold and the proceeds turned into the common fund. No one in that great mass of people lacked, and to every one was distributed according to his need.

All this was good and beautiful in its time, but we must discriminate between the form of their social order and its spirit.

The form was thoroughgoing communism; all property was merged into a common fund from which each drew his sustenance. This worked well for a time in a simple community of believers driven and held together by the pressure of a hostile environment.

But it does not follow that it would work well in a wide and complex civilization.

This form of social order has been tried out at various times and under various conditions. It is usually found in primitive societies, and it was at first attempted on a colossal scale by Soviet Russia, but it would not work and had to be modified. Communism has been tried in hundreds of experiments and has always, sooner or later, failed. In fact it did not last long with these early Christians and soon passed away.

At any rate it was their own voluntary arrangement, and has no authority over us.

They determined according to their judgment what was good for them and we are to do the same. The Bible does not identify its religion with any particular social organization and imposes none upon us. Christianity is not socialism, though socialism might be Christian.

The problem of the social order and administration is ever open for our solution and adjustment, and it is one of the greatest problems as it is sometimes one of the greatest perils that confront us in this day of growing social complexity and accumulating social evils and intense social feeling that may send its temperature and pressure up to the explosive point.

But the spirit of brotherhood of this Christian communism was of the very essence of Christianity and shines as a splendid light of example for us across all these centuries.

2. Power of the Resurrection

In the very heart of this Christian brotherhood is planted its true root and cause: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all."

There must have been some tremendous fact and force that came pushing its way up through the hardened crust of that ancient society, cracking and rending apart the selfishness of the ages and unfolding its new life into this beautiful blossom of love; and that fact was the resurrection of Christ.

Given this fact, and all other wonders become possible and easy.

This root can therefore reform the world, shattering the rocky rind of the planet and shedding the fragrance of its bloom over all continents and seas.

Believing this fact and possessed of it as a passion, great grace was upon them all. The spirit of the risen Jesus smote their selfishness and sin to death and fused them into one brotherhood. Their new social order was simply the outflowering of the spirit of the risen Christ in their hearts, and the one would have little value without the other. Their communism came from their new spirit, and not their new spirit from their communism.

This is a point at which a mistake is often made by social theorists.

They suppose that a better social order will make better men. There is some truth in this view, but the main truth is the other way, that better men will make a better social order. Human nature is the soil out of which the form of society grows, and it will do little good to change the form as long as this soil remains unchanged. Weeds mowed down and their roots left in the ground will soon grow up again.

Socialism would soon bring back upon us all the old evils together with a crop of new ones, unless we had new and better men to operate it; but if we get the better men, a Christianized society, perhaps we shall not need the new organization: the old will then do.

3. Dangers of Prosperity

Prosperity has its dangers. Many a man stands upright in his integrity in days of poverty, who goes down under prosperity. A small church is apt to maintain its unity and harmony, but when it multiplies its membership division is more likely to arise.

It was "when the disciples were multiplied" that this trouble arose.

The common treasury was now well-supplied and overflowing with funds, but these very funds caused dissension. The Grecian Jews, or Jews born in Greek countries who spoke Greek, complained that their widows were not getting their share of the relief funds that were being bestowed upon the needy.

Would not this very point of the distribution of the common store be the rock on which almost any form of communism or socialism would be wrecked?

It was an honor to the first Christian church that it looked after its needy widows, and Christianity has remained true to this spirit to this day.

It would be natural and easy for the Palestinian Jews to pay more attention to their own widows than to the fewer and less known Grecians, and there may have been some ground for the complaint. Yet out of the very effort to do good, trouble arose. Money was at the root of the matter, as it is in the case of many troubles both inside and outside the church. There were not enough material goods to go around to satisfy all, a difficulty that never arises in connection with spiritual goods, for they never run short and only multiply as they are distributed.

A congregation cannot be too careful in the administration of its money matters. Strict honesty and fairness should be maintained.

The dissatisfaction manifested itself in the form of murmuring. There were low mutterings, secret complaints and whisperings, that spread the evil contagion among the disaffected portion of the church.

The Grecians did not frankly state their grievance, but went around talking about it and sowing suspicion and discord.

4. Division of Labor

The twelve disciples took immediate action in the matter. They did not try to smother it by their mere word of authority, but they recognized that there was some justice in the complaint that should be heard and corrected.

They called a congregational meeting and laid the matter before the church. Hitherto the twelve disciples had been exercising general oversight of the relief funds, but now they saw that the business was getting beyond their ability to look after it personally. "It is not fit," they said, "that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables."

This principle is one of obvious good business sense.

The twelve were now the preachers of the church and had their own work to do which was demanding their full time. To leave this work to receive and distribute relief funds and listen to all the cases and complaints of the needy would take their time and distract their minds and thereby unfit them for the study and preparation for preaching.

In the division of labor, it is best that every one should stick to his own special task.

Ministers have a large work that calls for much preparation, and they should not be expected to look after the financial matters and petty affairs of the congregation. It would not be good sense for the pastor to leave his study to act as janitor, and it is better that he should not handle the money matters of the church, not even the benevolent funds.

The disciples therefore directed the people to choose seven brethren for this office, and this was done. This shows us how the first offices in the Christian church arose. They were instituted as they were needed. And these first officers were selected and elected by the people, showing that the church in its original organization and administration was a democratic institution.

These deacons having been elected, the disciples then continued "steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word."

5. Ministering to the Saints

A passage from Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians gives us a later glimpse into the early Christian church, throwing further light upon the care of these Christians for their poor. At this time Paul was in Macedonia on his way to Corinth and he wrote to the Corinthians that the Macedonians had already taken their collection for the saints at Jerusalem and had even had it ready for a year; and he uses their example as a ground for urging the Corinthians to get their offering to this cause ready, "lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence."

This incident throws much light into how affairs were going in this early church.

For one thing, how did it come about that the Christians at Jerusalem were now so poor that the Gentile churches out around the Mediterranean shore had to take up collections to aid them? Had they reduced themselves to poverty by their communism? Much could be said to support the view that this is one logical result of communism if not of socialism.

It may reduce production and thereby bring on poverty.

But however this may be, we see the fine spirit of brotherly help that pervaded these early churches. This was pretty much a new thing in that hard pagan world that had small sense of altruism and in which few if any institutions of like nature with our philanthropic agencies existed.

Christianity means brotherhood between all races to this day and we should be faithful to this spirit and extend it around the world.

And we further see that in that day they had the difficulty, so common with us, of gathering their collections for their benevolent work.

Paul plays up the generosity and readiness of the Macedonians to spur the Corinthians to get their offerings "that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion." All our church treasurers and boards and benevolent agencies are hampered with this very difficulty of getting the people to give and to give in time and are constantly using every means to spur them up to send their contribution and offerings in and keep the work going.

We must almost if not altogether resort to "extortion" to get the money, and we would do better and be better if we gave our contributions "as a matter of bounty."

6. Sowing and Reaping

Paul now puts his admonition to these Corinthians in the form of a principle, lifting it out of a mere local situation into a general rule and spirit.

Sowing and reaping is a frequent illustration of the spiritual life in the Bible. The psalmist used it and so did Jesus and so did Paul. All life grows from seed to blossom, and as we sow, so shall we reap. If we are niggardly and mean in our giving, we shall reap sparingly; but if we sow bountifully we shall reap in like measure. Therefore we should sow "not grudgingly, or of necessity," having our offering squeezed out of us under pressure or by a surgical operation: "for God loveth a cheerful giver," a hilarious giver, or one that shouts with joy as he has opportunity to serve God and men with his gifts.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Can you give instances in which communism has been tried in our country?
2. What is the difference between communism and socialism?
3. Has the power of the resurrection spent its force with us?
4. What is the principle of division of labor in industry?
5. Does the same principle apply in church work?
6. In what sense does a cheerful giver reap bountifully?

LESSON IV—JULY 26

Christianity Spread by Persecution

Lesson: Acts 7:54–8:4; 11:19–21; 26:9–11; 1 Peter 4:12–19.

Golden Text: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. Revelation 2:10.

Devotional Reading: 1 Peter 1:3–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Martyrs of the Early Church.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Results of Persecution.

Lesson Text: Acts 7:59–8:4; 11:19–21

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him.

3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison.

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Martyrdom of Stephen.

2. Saul Consenting.

3. Persecution.

4. Antioch.

5. Preaching to Greeks.

Of the seven deacons chosen to relieve the disciples of the burden of administering the relief funds in the church at Jerusalem, Stephen stood first.

Nothing more is known of him than appears in this narrative, but in this one event he leaped into the first place in the history of this church.

We hear nothing of his administration as a deacon, but he shot far beyond his office into power and fame as a preacher and inaugurated a momentous revolution in the history of Christianity.

He was the first to see and proclaim the truth that the old forms of worship had done their work and must disappear before the new. Judaism was the outgrown husk of Christianity from which it was to be set free and be scattered abroad over the world. This process cost the early church a long battle, in which Paul in time was the magnificent champion of the new liberty, but it was Stephen's inspired genius that first saw the truth and started the conflict.

This brought charges against Stephen by the ecclesiastical authorities and he delivered a long defense (7:2-53) in which he showed that God had not confined his revelations to the holy land but had in many places made known his will.

1. The Martyrdom of Stephen

This rapturous speech was too much for his judges, and so, stopping their ears that they might not hear the hateful words, with shouts of rage they rushed upon him, in violation of Roman law, hurried him through the gate of the city to the place of stoning. Here they stripped themselves for their bloody business, and murderous stones now flew hurtling through the air, and Stephen was quickly struck down.

The spirit of the Master shone out of this first martyr in wonderful power and beauty. The two expiring cries of Stephen are almost literal echoes from the cross of Christ.

First, he commended his spirit to the Lord Jesus. He had served him in life and now he trusted him in death, and he could look for no higher reward and glory than to go to him and forever be with him. Every soul shall go to its own place, whither its spiritual affinity draws it, and heaven is eternal kinship and companionship with Jesus.

But the martyr, like his Master, could not leave the world without praying for the very enemies that were cruelly stoning him to death.

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." How the breadth and splendor of this charity reveal and rebuke the narrowness and meanness of the enmity and grudges and spite we often cherish toward one another!

"And when he had said this he fell asleep." Here was born this Christian name for death that was carved upon the tombstones of the early Christians and is still embalmed in our word cemetery, "a sleeping place."

This inspired word has transfigured death and made it beautiful.

Sleep is rest and reinvigoration, and there shall be a glorious dawn when the night of death blossoms out into the eternal morning.

Thus holy Stephen went to his death, and the truth and especially the liberty of the gospel henceforth bore the red seal of martyrdom.

The first martyr was followed by a long line of these heroes. Scattered up and down Palestine are found to this day many bits of basalt bearing the word "Martyr," fragments of martyrs' monuments.

If they could die so bravely for Christ, how faithfully ought we to live for him?

2. Saul Consenting

In this dark hour a new name appears on the pages of Scripture which, though it rises red as blood in the gloom of this martyrdom, yet presently shines out as one of the most splendid stars in all the firmament of human history. "The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." "And Saul was consenting unto his death."

In this incriminating attitude is first seen him who afterward so powerfully preached the faith he here attempted to destroy.

Saul at this time was only standing by the clothes of those who did the bloody work of casting the stones, but one does not need to throw stones himself or even to speak in order to breathe out slaughter or to spit out spite.

Silence may be consent, and standing may be saying.

We may do the cruelest wrong to another without saying a word: a silent attitude or gesture may do the work.

But Stephen's death cries entered into Saul's soul and we know not what part they played in his spectacular conversion as soon after he

journeyed to Damascus on the further business of arresting Christian believers.

Stephen's marvelous prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies may have been a potent influence in changing Saul into Paul.

3. Persecution

Saul's zeal was infectious and on the very day of Stephen's death a great persecution broke out in Jerusalem against believers.

At the stoning of Stephen he stood in the background, but now he came forward into the foreground boldly flying his colors as a persecutor and ravager of the church.

Having got a taste of blood Saul wanted more of it and grew furious as he made havoc of the church, laying it waste as a wild boar ravages a vineyard. He did not wait for Christians to be brought to him, but he went after them, searching every house and hunting out men and women and thrusting them into prison. He inaugurated a reign of terror in Jerusalem, and his fiery zeal flamed out on that sacred mountain top like a volcano.

But again it was proved that persecution, instead of suppressing truth, is only a means for spreading it abroad.

In the great Chicago fire, the wind blowing on the blazing buildings caught up the burning embers and, carrying them out over the city, started a hundred new centers of conflagration. So the winds of persecution, blowing on the fire the Holy Spirit had kindled in Jerusalem, scattered the believers as burning embers to kindle the gospel in Judea and Samaria and eventually all over the world.

The apostles, however, stayed at their post and held their ground in Jerusalem.

Leaders must not leave when they are most needed.

Physicians must stay in the city when the plague is sweeping through its homes. Pastors must often stay with their churches when calamity falls upon them.

One of these embers in the person of Philip the evangelist lighted down in Samaria and there started a fire.

Samaria was a hard field in which to begin.

The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, there was bitter racial and religious enmity between them. What chance did the gospel have in such a place as that? No city missionary down in the slums of a great crowded center of population, or home missionary out on western plains, ever had a worse case. Yet, nothing daunted, Philip went to work and presently the gospel there proved itself the power of God unto salvation.

Let us turn our discouragements into incentives to renewed faithfulness and take courage and go forward.

4. Antioch

The violent explosion of the persecution shot flying sparks far and wide and we find believers at various points around the Mediterranean shore.

One of these points stands out conspicuous as one of the most important centers in the spread of Christianity.

Antioch at this time was a city of half a million people and was the third city in the Roman world, Rome being first and Alexandria second. It was situated three hundred miles north of Jerusalem on the river Orontes, twenty miles from the sea. As it was the political capital of Syria and a center of commerce and art, it was a city of great wealth and architectural magnificence. It had many fine temples and theaters, a main avenue running through its heart four miles from east to west, paved and lined on each side with two rows of columns, and walls, aqueducts and bridges, and its massive ruins remain to this day.

While it was the third in rank as a city, it was first in corruption and vice. Near it was the famous or infamous grove of Daphne, ten miles in circumference, an immense pleasure establishment that was a plague spot to all the world. Here vice was cultivated as an art and sensuality as a form of worship. So infamous and infectious was its evil influence that even Rome complained that the Syrian Orontes had befouled the Roman Tiber.

Yet in this hotbed of vice grew the white flower of Gentile Christianity.

Antioch became a Christian center next in importance to Jerusalem itself. It was the first strategic point seized in the Gentile world and

was made a base of missionary campaigns northward through Asia Minor and westward through Europe.

It has always been the plan of Christianity to plant itself in the cities and work outward from them as centers; and however wicked the city in which we live, or evil the influences that surround us, we can grow the white flower of a pure life.

5. Preaching to Greeks

To this city came certain of the dispersed disciples and "spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus."

This announcement marks a radical departure and a new epoch.

Hitherto believers had spoken "the word to none save only to Jews." A continental distance lies between these two statements found in verses 19 and 20: "speaking the word to none save only to Jews," but now they "spake unto the Greeks also." They had been working on the theory that the gospel was only for the Jews and that it had nothing to do with Gentiles, that it was a form of Judaism and was still shut up within its racial and national boundaries.

But we have seen how this whole history had been a gradual breaking down of this assumption point by point. Stephen began the work of preaching the broader view and here and there at various points Gentiles were converted and baptized.

But these were only sporadic cases that fell in the way of apostles and in a degree were forced upon them.

This was notably the case with Peter in his relations with Cornelius at Cæsarea. We have not yet seen the gospel preached directly to the Greeks as a class on the same terms and in the same spirit as to the Jews.

Here this momentous fact first appears.

These disciples preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks, the pagan residents of Antioch.

All distinction between Jew and Gentile had been obliterated from their minds and they saw that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men without regard to their race and rank and religion. Uncircumcision was

no longer a bar in the way of conversion and membership in the Christian church. The ceremonial law was gone and grace had come.

Moses was no longer master, and Jesus was Lord of all.

The gospel was getting well out of its Jewish shell and was unloosing its wings to fly to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Christianity was no longer a Jewish sect but was asserting itself as a world religion.

The battle was not yet fully and finally won, but it was far on towards victory.

It is remarkable that this revolutionary policy was not practically inaugurated by church authorities up in Jerusalem or by apostles or deacons, but by unordained and unauthorized laymen out in a pagan city.

Certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene, points far from the official seat and source of Christianity, began this business, apparently of their own accord, moved by the wider and freer spirit that was bred in the hearts of those that were out on the field of paganism and knew its needs.

This principle has frequently been exemplified in the history of the church.

Great religious movements, such as the Reformation in Germany, the Wesleyan revival in England, the Sunday school, the Y.M.C.A. and the Salvation Army, did not originate with ecclesiastical authorities, but with unofficial ministers and laymen.

The human heads of the church, as represented in popes, bishops, and assemblies, are generally conservative and often obstructive, and the Holy Spirit usually pours in new life and grows new organs of activity down among the common people.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name other notable martyrs in the Christian church.
2. Are there any martyrs today?
3. Was Saul conscientious in his persecution of believers?
4. Is Christianity anywhere being persecuted today?
5. May "hard times" be "good times" for the church and for individual believers?

LESSON V—AUGUST 2

Philip's Missionary Labors

Lesson: Acts 8:5–40.

Golden Text: They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. Acts 8:4.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 13:3b–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Pioneering for Jesus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Gospel Breaks over the Frontier.

Lesson Text: Acts 8:26–40

26 But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship;

28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:
His generation, who shall declare?
For his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?

35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Strange Interruption.

2. A Distinguished Traveler.

3. A Pertinent Inquiry.
4. The Scriptures Explained.
5. A Splendid Convert.

From Jerusalem, the original seat and source of Christianity, the first mission was down to Samaria, a rival city and seat of a hostile worship.

Deep racial and religious differences separated these two rival mountain tops flaming defiance at each other, but the new Christian spirit found its first expression towards those outside its own ground and pale in the evangelist Philip who went to Samaria, where the preaching of the word was attended with power and many conversions, and there was great joy in that city.

It is the mission of Christianity to cross all racial and religious chasms and close them up in the brotherhood of Christ.

The story of the first Christian mission that thus opened in Samaria now suddenly shifts to the south country in a desert.

1. A Strange Interruption

In the midst of the great work in Samaria the command came to Philip, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." It must have seemed a strange interruption that took him from a revival in a populous city and sent him into a desert. Strong arguments would occur to him to prove that as he had started the work in Samaria, so he should stay with it to the end.

In nothing else are we more self-willed and selfish than in choosing the place where we shall work and the kind of work we want to do.

We want work that is congenial and conspicuous and obviously important and that floats on the rising and sparkling tide of success. The city has special attractions for us and we think the work there is more important than anywhere else.

Yet in nothing else perhaps is our judgment more liable to be mistaken and blind than with respect to the place of our work. Self-interest shows us things in a false light, and ambition would push us into places where the Lord does not want us.

2. A Distinguished Traveler

Philip, a man of unquestioning obedience, arose and went, and the Lord's purpose developed rapidly and was soon abundantly justified. The road running down from Jerusalem to Gaza was a trunk line of travel between Judea and Egypt and countries beyond. Though it ran through a desert region, yet it was frequented and often thronged with travelers, merchants, soldiers, ambassadors, traveling singly or in caravans, presenting in their Oriental garb a many-colored and picturesque stream of life.

On this road on this occasion, returning home, was an Ethiopian, a high officer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, secretary of her treasury. This man from a far pagan country had been up to Jerusalem to worship.

The Jews at this time were already widely scattered in many heathen lands and cities and had attracted Gentiles to their monotheistic and imageless religion.

> **The Ethiopian was a God-fearing Gentile, if not a full convert to the worship of Jehovah, at least an inquirer after the truth, and, having tasted of the stream, had gone up to the fountain at Jerusalem that he might drink more deeply of its waters.**

Nothing is recorded of his experience there, and we know not whether he had met any of the Christian community and heard the story of Jesus, or whether he met only Pharisees and scribes and departed without learning of the true Light that had come into the world. On his way home he was still pursuing his inquiries as he sat in his chariot and read the prophet Isaiah in the Greek translation or Septuagint version of the Old Testament.

> **Such an inquiring earnest soul shall not be forgotten and left unvisited by the Spirit of all truth and grace, and upon its yearning twilight shall fuller light dawn.**
>
> **It was to meet this man that the Lord had brought Philip down into the desert.**

He may have thought that he was leaving a great work on the top wave of its success in a city to go out into a barren field in the country, but he was unwittingly going to what was probably the richest field and greatest work of his ministry.

There was in Samaria no such important man as this distinguished traveler waiting for his coming down into the desert.

The Ethiopian treasurer was the key to his country. He being converted would carry the gospel into a distant region and would be like a single seed that may stock a continent with a new plant. John Williams, returning to his mission in the Pacific islands, carried with him a basket of banana plants that stocked those islands and has furnished food to this day for widespread populations.

Philip was carrying such food with him down into the desert and sending it on to a far country.

He was like Peter launching out at the Master's word into the deep: Philip may have thought there was nothing in the desert for him, as Peter thought there were no fish in that place, but nowhere else did Peter and the other disciples draw up nets so burdened with fish, and nowhere else was there so great a work and blessing waiting for Philip.

The Lord knows what he is doing when he bids us let down our nets or sends us into the desert or sets us at any task, and the place that seems empty to us may be fullest with blessing.

3. A Pertinent Inquiry

Philip was quick to see and seize his opportunity. The Ethiopian traveling with his attendants would be easily distinguished as a man of mark and the Spirit pointed him out to the evangelist as his man. Philip ran along by the side of the rolling chariot and heard the Ethiopian as he read aloud. Among Orientals, a stranger could do this without any seeming intrusion.

Presently Philip saw a chance to slip in a word and start a conversation. A little tact will generally enable us to find the point to insert the entering wedge of religious conversation so naturally and gently as to cause no embarrassment, as Jesus did with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well.

"Understandest thou what thou readest?"

This is a pertinent inquiry that comes home to every one of us.

There is little use in reading anything unless we in some measure understand it, and often great issues, even life itself, may hang on this very point. The student needs to understand the book he is reading,

the pupil the teacher, the patient the physician, the soldier the command of the officers, or error or disaster or death may result.

The gospel begins in the understanding and spreads through the heart and life.

Christianity is not a superstitious but a rational religion. It is an historical and logical system of truth that presents proofs and vindicates itself at the bar of reason. It does not ask to be accepted blindly, but invites us to understand it and bids us prove all things and hold fast only that which is good.

We must first understand the gospel before we can receive it.

For ages men did not make much use of steam and electricity because they did not understand them. Ignorance is a bar to the best things. If we are to stand in the Christian life we must first understand it.

The Ethiopian answered, "How can I, except some one shall guide me?" "And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him."

This reveals a beautiful spirit of humility and teachableness.

Though a great man, accustomed to being obeyed, yet he did not assume an air of superior wisdom, but was conscious of his need of light and was teachable as a child. This is the first step into any kingdom, even the kingdom of science.

Conceit is worse than ignorance.

The Bible especially is subject to the need of being understood. We cannot just open it and understand it offhand, without studying it, any more than we could thus understand Sir Isaac Newton or Aristotle.

The scholars that have studied its lands and languages, its history and customs, its books and authors and texts and translations, should be bidden to come and sit with us and unfold to us its meaning.

Yet all human helps will not enable us to understand it aright unless we beseech the Spirit to interpret it for us.

4. The Scriptures Explained

Philip swung up into the seat beside the Ethiopian, the chariot rolled off, and the explanation of Scripture began. It is remarkable how often in the New Testament we find the gospel being preached in all kinds of

secular and unconventional places, in the street, on the shore, in a fishing boat, to a man up in a tree, and here in a chariot running along a public road out in a desert.

Any place may be a pulpit for us, and one soul is a great audience.

The passage the Ethiopian was reading was Isaiah 53:7–8, in which the Messiah is described as a sheep led to the slaughter, dumb before his persecutors, denied justice in his humiliation, and his life taken from the earth.

The passage perplexed the Ethiopian Gentile, and well it might, for it troubled even Jewish rabbis.

They were not desiring such a humiliated and suffering Messiah, had no room for him in their theology and church and hearts, and hence with this plain description of him in their hands, they did not recognize and know him when he came.

If we would see the crucified Christ as the King in his beauty, we must in some degree have his spirit in our hearts.

Only like can see like. The heart can see deeper than the brain and is a surer guide to spiritual truth. Jesus is set before us in the Scriptures, even from Genesis to Revelation, and yet if we do not have some affinity with him in spirit our eyes may be dim and blind and we shall fail to see and know him. Ever should we pray, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." It is because of this lack of spiritual affinity and of honest inquiry that the Bible is a sealed book to many, even an absurd volume which they can ridicule.

But they thereby expose their own pitiful blindness and become objects of pity, even to many secular minds who appreciate it as a supreme book of literature and light.

5. A Splendid Convert

With such a preacher and such a text and such a hearer, preaching quickly resulted in conversion and practice. Presently they came to a stream of water and the treasurer said, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Had he been looking for hindrances he could easily have found them in plenty.

Shadows thinner than air can keep men out of the church and kingdom when they do not want to go in. But this man wanted to go in, and so nothing could keep him out.

If the gospel was true he thought it ought to be believed; if Jesus was the Saviour he ought to be obeyed.

Likely enough the Ethiopian still had difficulties and doubts in his mind, but he felt that he ought to act.

So the chariot was stopped and there, in the presence of all the attendants, he was baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

"And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing." Thus Philip down in that desert found and won his most splendid convert, a seed that was wafted far off into Ethiopia to bring forth we know not what results in that land; and the evangelist himself, having done his work in the desert, went on his way rejoicing and was carried to other fields.

This is what comes of following the Lord whithersoever he commands us to go; we know not what great blessings we shall sow and reap for others and for ourselves.

The gospel was now breaking over the narrow frontiers of Judaism, and pushing its way out into the Gentile world. It has in it vital elements and forces of life that cannot be bounded but will spread around the world. All countries and continents are its field. All races are to become its subjects. The torch that Philip carried down into that desert has passed through many hands until it has come down to us and we are to carry it on.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give other instances of how men were strangely called to other places of service.
2. Give instances of how men traveling common roads have come upon unexpected blessings.
3. What questions should we ask about the Scriptures?
4. In what ways are scholars opening the Bible to us today?
5. What is the chief use of Scripture?
6. How may we use it in evangelism?

LESSON VI—AUGUST 9

Saul Converted and Commissioned

Lesson: Acts 9:1–31; 22:3–21; Galatians 1:11–17; 1 Timothy 1:12–17.

Golden Text: I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. Acts 26:19.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 6:1–8.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Vision and a Response.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Saul's Conversion and Commission.

Lesson Text: Acts 9:1–9, 17–19; 1 Timothy 1:12–14

1 But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven:

4 And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he *said,* I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:

6 But rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

17 And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

18 And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized;

19 And he took food and was strengthened.

12 For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.

13 Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed unto *thee* guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Saul the Persecutor at Work.

2. Conversion at the Crisis of Conviction.

3. Conversion Carried Forward.
4. Coworkers in Conversion.
5. Conversion Completed.
6. Conversion Conveyed to Others.

The " young man " that stood by the clothes at the stoning of Stephen here reappears in the narrative and undergoes his marvelous transformation. Black carbon may become white diamond by the simple rearrangement of its atoms, and Saul, the greatest persecutor of the gospel, became Paul, its greatest preacher.

The story of his conversion is one of the most dramatic and thrilling pages of this history and marks its greatest epoch.

It is related three times in the Acts, twice by Paul himself (9:1–31; 22:1–13; 26:1–23), and it had burnt itself so vividly upon his brain that he never could forget it.

We here begin the study of one of the great characters of the Bible and one of the great men of all time.

Paul (the Roman form of his name, the Aramaic form being Saul) was reared in a Greek city and was a Roman citizen and a Jewish lawyer, so that three racial strains and three civilizations, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman, met and mingled in his blood.

He was a man of acute and powerful intellect, of logic all compact, yet of poetic and fiery temperament, a keen thinker and forceful writer who could sound the depths of philosophy, or let loose his thoughts on the wings of imagination, and an impassioned orator who could put the spell of his eloquent speech on vast audiences.

Paul probably is the most strongly marked character in the Bible.

He was unique in his angular individuality and in the mixture in his nature of incongruous elements and discordant moods, and was intense and uncompromising in his principles and convictions.

Stephen began the battle of freeing Christianity from its Jewish shell, but Paul was the magnificent champion who carried it forward to final victory.

1. Saul the Persecutor at Work

We are first given a view of Saul the persecutor at work. Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against Christians. His soul blazed with hatred and zeal against the disciples of Jesus and he breathed fire.

His presence in Jerusalem made that sacred mountain top a flaming volcano that scorched and burnt the faith that soon would have made it blossom with new life.

Presently the holy city was practically bare of the gospel. The disciples were dead or in hiding. But Saul was not satisfied. He considered the new worship most dangerous and deadly and would make thorough work of its destruction and leave not a germ behind.

He had heard of or suspected the presence of believers in Damascus and set forth for that ancient city that he might search it and bring any suspects bound to Jerusalem.

In all this he was terribly conscientious and verily thought he was doing the will of God; for men may be sincerely conscientious in their motives and yet dreadfully wrong in their actions.

Saul was not wholly guiltless in his course, however, for had he conscientiously sought and used all the light available for him? He himself does not seem to have been wholly at ease in his conscience.

Though his conversion came suddenly, yet it had long roots probably running back to the stoning of Stephen.

Sudden events are always preceded by deep and slow preparation.

It took Saul several days to journey on horse from Jerusalem 140 miles north to Damascus. This must have been a time of cooling down and quiet meditation in his fiery soul. The excitement and passion of his work in Jerusalem had subsided and he found himself out in the solitude and silence of the desert under the solemn Syrian stars.

Conscience began to consider.

If there was any still small voice in him that had been drowned in the confusion of the city, it now had a chance to speak. He unexpectedly found himself troubled over his work. He was surprised to find his convictions were not so unanimous and solid as he had supposed. Cracks and fractures began to cleave his conscience into warring doubts

and perplexities. He felt himself on the eve of an impending crisis, already conscience was ripe for revolt.

This view of his psychological condition is not explicitly disclosed in the narrative, but it is in accordance with human experience and it is suggested by the statement in the narrative that it was "as he journeyed" that the crisis came.

2. Conversion at the Crisis of Conviction

Upon this thoughtful troubled man conversion fell. Damascus was near and decision could not be long delayed. The Holy Spirit found him trembling upon the point of doubt and bore down upon him at this critical moment.

As in all conversions, human and divine elements were interblended and worked together and we cannot always draw the mystic line between them.

There were spectacular features in this case that were supernatural and unique, but the same principles work in every converted soul. A blinding blaze of light burned through his sky, and the proud persecutor was unhorsed. A voice was then heard, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" This was probably the very question that was troubling Saul himself.

The Spirit touched the sorest point in his conscience and pierced his sin.

It is generally some form of this question that presses upon the soul in conversion. What is our relation to Jesus? Are we persecuting him, or are we pleasing him?

Saul answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" Already he seems to know who the questioner is. A wonderful answer was given to this inquiry: "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

Did this startling revelation strike terror into Saul's soul?

Did he expect a bolt of retribution? But no, the answer continued, "rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

Not another word about the persecution, but only words of kindness and guidance and promise were spoken to the prostrate humbled man.

Saul's sin was overwhelmed in God's mercy and washed away in a flood of grace.

Christ comes not to judge us but to save us, and when we turn to him in penitence and faith our sin is forgiven and forgotten.

3. Conversion Carried Forward

Saul's conversion was now begun, but was not complete; he had passed the crisis of the turning point but had yet many steps to take. The voice bade him rise and enter the city where he would receive further directions.

Conversion does not answer all questions and clear up all difficulties.

It usually makes plain only a few steps which will lead us into more light. Saul took these steps, he arose from the earth and went into the city.

He immediately obeyed his new Master's will and turned his faith into faithfulness.

There was much that he did not know, he could not see, he was being led by the hand like a little child in the dark; but one thing he did know, that Jesus was his Lord, and his soul was forever set in its purpose to trust and follow him.

This is the perfection of faith; not to know many things, to be led by the hand through thick darkness, yet to trust the Lord and follow as he leads us on.

This blindness continued with Saul for three days, days during which he neither ate nor drank. His conversion did not issue in immediate light and peace but rather wrapped him in night. The great deeps of his soul had been stirred and then continued to surge for many hours before they quieted down into calm. These were doubtless days of profound self-examination and meditation in which he fought every doubt through to victory.

Conversion may plunge us into perplexity and pain.

But light always lies forward and not backward, and it is only by following on to know the Lord that our path will grow clearer and shine more and more unto the perfect day.

4. Coworkers in Conversion

Others had a part in this work of grace, and we see how complex is the process of conversion. His attendants led the blind man by the hand into the city. It is pathetic to think of Paul, one of the great men of the world, being led as though he were a child, perhaps by a servant. But this great soul could not come into the kingdom without the help of some very common and humble people.

We are all members one of another, and the strongest needs help from the weakest, and the most learned can get some profitable guidance from the most illiterate.

We may not be great ourselves and may be the weakest of the weak and the humblest of the humble, but we do a great thing when we take any human being by the hand and lead him through darkness into the city of God.

This is the work of the minister and teacher and parent and of every Christian.

In the city, also, there was need of human coöperation. The same Spirit that converted Saul called Ananias to come to his help. Ananias knew of Saul as the bloody persecutor—what Christian in any city did not know of Saul? so far had his dread name spread—and was frightened at the message and thought there might be some mistake about it. But the Lord assured him that it was all right, and presently he stood before the terrible persecutor, addressing him as "Brother Saul" and bidding him receive the Holy Spirit. When the Lord bids us seek and help a struggling soul, no doubt or fear or difficulty of our imagination should hold us back.

The Spirit visited that soul before he sent for us and prepared the way for our coming.

We are coworkers with God at many points and ways in the world, but the finest and noblest way in which we are laborers together with him is in saving and helping human souls.

5. Conversion Completed

The Holy Spirit now came upon Saul and conversion was soon complete.

He was filled full of faith and fervency.

His mind cleared up into sharp and sure convictions and his heart grew calm and strong. Blindness fell from his eyes. He now knew whom he believed and was henceforth able to do all things, Christ strengthening him.

Two steps he immediately took that are among the first acts of the Christian life.

First, he was baptized.

Obedience with him was full obedience. He saw no point at which to draw the line or hesitate in the commands of Christ; he did not begin to pick and choose among them, but simply obeyed them all.

Baptism was the commanded badge of discipleship, and therefore he would wear it. He did not think it was incumbent on him to change or abolish the badge, any more than a patriot would think it proper for him to discard the flag of his country.

He would no more be ashamed of the sign than of the Saviour.

Faith that stops short of full obedience in confession is of doubtful depth and genuineness and had better not be trusted.

Having been baptized Saul straightway preached Jesus in the synagogue that he is the Son of God.

Having received the grace of God he was now ready to give it.

What splendid and powerful preaching it was that began there that day! How it has shaped the centuries and enriched and transformed the world!

We all sit under its golden eloquence and divine utterance and inspired genius, and while we cannot speak with the same tongue yet we may all in our humble way proclaim Jesus that he is the Son of God.

The world needs not only great oceans and rivers, but also the little streams that feed the meadows and even the tiny raindrops that each one picks out its own blade of grass and makes it green.

6. Conversion Conveyed to Others

Paul, in a passage from his First Letter to Timothy, conveyed his own conversion on to his disciple that he might keep up the apostolic succession and pass it on to others.

He alludes to his sufferings in the cause of Christ, yet he is not ashamed of them but rather glories in them.

He is now writing some years after his conversion, but he is only all the more persuaded of its reality and of the trust he put in him who "is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."

He then charges his young disciple to "hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us."

This same charge is transmitted to us. Paul handed his torch, lit by the Holy Spirit, to Timothy and through him to us, and we are to carry it aloft and keep its flame burning brightly that it may continue to enlighten the world and lead others into the grace of Christ.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is conversion?
2. Name other prominent conversions in the Scriptures.
3. At what ages do conversions mostly take place?
4. How far are we responsible for our own conversion?
5. Why do men need to be converted?

LESSON VII—AUGUST 16

Sowing and Reaping. (Temperance Lesson)

Lesson: Galatians 6:1–10.

Golden Text: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Galatians 6:7.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 5:11–15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Sowing and Reaping (Effects of Alcohol).

Topic for Young People and Adults: Sowing and Reaping (Effects of Alcohol).

Lesson Text: Galatians 6:1–10

1 Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor.

5 For each man shall bear his own burden.

6 But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Bearing One Another's Burdens.

2. Bearing Our Own Burdens.

3. Law of Sowing and Reaping.

4. A Multiplied Harvest.

5. Fainting Not in Well-Doing.

Paul, while a master of logic and often conducting a theological argument with his readers, yet also mingled his letters with practical

advice, sometimes warning them severely and at other times admonishing them gently or comforting them tenderly.

This Epistle is full of battle against the Judaizing Christian who wanted to fasten the yoke of Mosaic ceremonies on the new converts, a trumpet blast of war against such attempted bondage, yet in this, as in other passages of it, he writes as a faithful teacher and pastor in giving his readers wholesome instructions.

1. Bearing One Another's Burdens

"Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The spirit of finding fault with one another is a general trait of human nature and we all have some of this disposition lurking in us.

It seems to give us a comfortable feeling to point out flaws in and pass judgment on others as though their failures proved our own superiority, the faults of others acting as background against which our own virtues stand out in brighter contrast.

That it is our duty at times to correct faults in others is obvious, especially in the relation of parent and child, teacher and pupil, and in our social and public relations. Such criticism is necessary to the correction of faults, but it is not a duty that should be sought, much less a censorious habit that should be cultivated or permitted.

Paul, however, surrounds this duty with such safeguards as will prevent its unjustified and free exercise.

Judgment is to be passed, not on every little personal fault, but only on more serious matters and occasions, as when a man is "overtaken in any trespass." And further and as a still greater check upon such faultfinding it is to be restricted to those who are themselves without fault. "Ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

That surely would stop most of our faultfinding.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Who can stand this test, who is so spotless that he can point out stains on another? It sometimes turns out that those who are most

censorious towards others are most flagrant in their own faults, and a little self-knowledge, or the power of seeing ourselves as others see us, would stop much of our faultfinding before it escapes from our lips and, better still, would hush it in our hearts.

This spirit comes to its full expression in the admonition, " Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." We are to bear the burdens of others of every kind, personal faults and afflictions in sympathy and kindness and helpfulness, even as Christ bore and still bears our burdens.

This spirit of personal patience and goodwill is the oil that lubricates the social machinery of our life and makes it run smoothly without grinding or jar. It lightens the burdens of others and inspires them with patience and courage and cheerfulness.

And it is the best way of correcting their faults, for they may thus be made indirectly to feel and see their faults and thereby be saved from the irritation and resentment of criticism and correction at the hands of others and be led to set about correcting their infirmities and errors themselves.

2. Bearing Our Own Burdens

Paul now gradually passes over from our duties to others to what each should do for himself. " But let each prove his own work, then shall he have his glorying in regard to himself alone, and not of his neighbor." We are much disposed to bring the work of others into comparison with our own to our own advantage, but we are now admonished to look at our own work of every kind in a spirit of self-criticism, testing it by the same standards as or by stricter standards than those we apply to others.

Instead of glorying over others we may find reason for worthy satisfaction in our own work.

" For each man shall bear his own burden." This may seem to contradict the previous admonition, " Bear ye one another's burdens," but of course we are to do both and the two are not mutually exclusive. The word translated " burdens " in verse 2 means a heavy crushing load that may overtax the strength of its bearer so that it is a call for our help, and the word translated " burden " in verse 5 is a different

one and means the pack that a porter or soldier carries so that it is not too much for him but is his regular load.

It is an obvious fact that "each man shall bear his own burden," for every one has the burden of his daily work and temptations and trials as well as of his own infirmities and faults, and he cannot rightly get rid of these and unload them on others but should carry them himself.

Everything at this point depends on the spirit in which this is done.

There are ways in which we can try to shift our own burden, especially of work, on others and thereby become shirkers and parasites in the world. This is not only social unfaithfulness and offensiveness, but is also un-Christian and should put us to shame.

Let us stand up and carry our own pack and do our share of the world's work. And let us bear our burden without complaining, not magnifying it by talking about it and making it an offense to others, but in quiet patience and courage carry on and say nothing about it.

3. The Law of Sowing and Reaping

Paul gives some plain advice about sharing our good things with others and especially says that those who teach or preach the gospel or any form of truth should be supported by those that profit by such service.

This is a principle of universal application from the teacher in the day school up to the university and also to the minister in the church and missionary field.

Paul supported himself, but he did not demand that all missionaries and ministers should do this and the changed conditions of our day make it impracticable that they should do so. But it is apparent that this question of the support of preachers was already rising and becoming acute in his day.

This point leads him on to a deep law of all life, the law of seed sowing and harvest gathering.

Wheat from wheat and weeds from weeds. Plant a thorn tree and you will not get grapes; sow thistle seed and you will not gather figs. To get

corn you must plant corn and never anything else. Every seed brings forth after its own kind.

This is a universal and inexorable law of nature.

Not one exception has ever been known to break its inevitable continuity and necessity. Nature never forgets what has been sown and never brings forth the wrong thing. By seeing what comes out of the ground you can tell every time what has gone into the ground, and by seeing what goes in you can predict with infallible certainty what will come out.

Nature never makes a mistake. She is calmly and coolly impartial and just and shows no favors and makes no exceptions. She would as soon stop the earth rotating on its axis or drop the sun out of the sky as give you the wrong plant for the right seed, or the right plant for the wrong seed. You shall get just what you give, and you can get just what you want by sowing what you would reap.

This law runs on up into our individual and social life and rules in our thoughts and deeds, ideas and ideals, as well as in seeds and roots.

God is not careful about this law down under the ground and then careless about it up in the region of the mental and moral and spiritual life.

Our life is a sowing in which all our myriad thoughts and actions are living seeds, which are either golden grains of truth and righteousness, self-control and good character, or blackened seeds of sin, and we select and scatter these seeds by our own choice and hand.

4. A Multiplied Harvest

In the working of this law we must note the fact that the seed brings forth a multiplied harvest, and this especially bears upon our subject of temperance. That is a wonderful principle in nature by which a single seed will multiply itself many fold.

All the wheat in the world has come from a single grain, all the oaks from a single acorn.

The tiniest seed has in it boundless harvests and may overrun all the continents and cover the globe.

So is it with the seeds we sow in our life.

Any thought or act does not stop with itself but it goes on; and it goes on in a multiplied ratio. It reproduces itself many fold and brings forth endless harvests.

All habits illustrate this.

No one ever became profane, or a liar, or a drunkard all at once. He uttered the first oath with hesitating lips and then was afraid; he told the first fib, he took the first glass of intoxicating drink only to be social and have a good time. These acts did not look bad in the start. But they were seeds which no sooner were sown than they multiplied and these in turn were sown and grew until they were a continual harvest, and the boy whose lips were pure profaned all his speech with oaths, and by the same process he became a liar and finally a drunkard.

A habit is thus a harvest of actions.

The drunkard is reaping just what he has sown. Every glass of liquor overtaxed his nerves and created in them a craving for more. This process repeated grew into a fiery hunger which only something that tasted like lightning could satisfy.

The terrible danger of drink is the first glass: let it alone. Beware of the first oath, the first untruth, the first intoxicating drink. Sow only the good seed of pure speech and truth and self-control.

Never drop anything into your life you would not have come out of your life in multiplied harvests.

This law of multiplied growth in life has been expressed as follows: Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.

5. Fainting Not in Well-Doing

There are many dangers connected with forming good habits and living a good life, and Paul here notes one of them. "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Weariness besets all our activities, especially those that tax our powers of body and mind, will and work.

Our powers are limited in amount and endurance and may grow tired with fatigue. Muscles refuse to respond, nerves are worn ragged

and seem ready to snap under the strain. Other causes may weary us, such as loss of interest in the work, discouragement and depression.

This weariness may attend our best work, our "beautiful-doing," as "well-doing" means.

The best people are subject to this danger of fainting in their endeavors to keep their activities going in the good life. Elijah thought he was ready to die and so did Jonah. Jesus himself had faltering moments.

We must find some way of resisting this tendency to faint.

One way that is often the need of the hour is rest and recreation. Something to eat was prescribed for Elijah and this is often good medicine for the weary. A change of air and scene may put the body and soul in better tune and restore their music.

The consideration Paul urges is, "for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

The sailor tossed in the storm keeps his eye on the shore and harbor he is trying to make, the tired farmer on the harvest he is going to reap, the student on his success in the field for which he is preparing, the Christian on the harvest of good that he enjoys and will enjoy in fuller measure.

In wearied and discouraged hours let us seek the means that will meet our needs and especially gird up our loins and hold on for the joy that is set before us.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we overcome the disposition to be faultfinders?
2. What personal burdens are hardest to bear?
3. May we transform our burdens into stepping-stones to better things?
4. What are some of the terrible harvests of intemperance?
5. How can we distinguish true weariness from mere laziness and selfishness?

LESSON VIII—AUGUST 23

A Gospel for All Men

Lesson: Acts 10:1–11:18; 1 Corinthians 1:23–25.

Golden Text: There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him. Romans 10:12.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 10:1–5.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: First Steps in World Brotherhood.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Gospel for All Men.

Lesson Text: Acts 11:5–18

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even unto me:

6 Upon which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw the fourfooted beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the heaven.

7 And I heard also a voice saying unto me, Rise, Peter; kill and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth.

9 But a voice answered the second time out of heaven, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common.

10 And this was done thrice: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And behold, forthwith three men stood before the house in which we were, having been sent from Cæsarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, making no distinction. And these six brethren also accompanied me; and we entered into the man's house:

13 And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning.

16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

17 If then God gave unto them the like gift as *he did* also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?

18 And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. The Issue at the Jerusalem Council.

2. Peter's Story of His Vision.

3. His Account of the Conversion of Cornelius.
4. Effect of the Narrative.
5. Growth through Controversy.

We come now to a critical day in the history of Christianity. The new faith could not travel far without coming into conflict with the old faith within the church itself.

The problem of adjusting old faith with new knowledge is ever pressing upon us and never more severely than in our own day.

The transition from the old to the new is usually negotiated with some difficulty and even distress, but in time it is worked out and Christian faith, having passed the rapids, again slips into smooth water with a broader and deeper current and has peaceful sailing for a time until another transition through rocks and rapids is struck.

The particular rock that reared its resistance right in the midst of the stream of the early church was the question whether the Gentiles should be received into its membership.

Two parties arose and divided on this issue, the one holding that Gentiles could not be admitted and the other contending that the gospel was for all, Gentiles equally with Jews.

The whole future of Christianity hung trembling on the decision of this question. Had the Judaistic party won their contention, Christianity would have been doomed in the start by being restricted to a Jewish sect; the victory of the liberal party made it a world religion.

1. The Issue at the Jerusalem Council

The news of what Peter had done at Joppa in receiving Cornelius, a Roman officer and Gentile, into the Christian church (Chapter 10), rapidly spread through Judea and soon was matter of talk up in Jerusalem. The report was abroad that "the Gentiles had also received the word of God."

Some of the brethren scented heresy in this report.

Peter learned of the dissatisfaction, and, taking with him six brethren who had been with him at Cæsarea and witnessed the conversion of Cornelius, went up to Jerusalem to give an account of his course. There

" they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

Who were these " of the circumcision?" They were Christian Jews that still held to the law of Moses and believed that only Jews observing the law of circumcision should be admitted into the church. They therefore retained all their Jewish prejudices against the uncircumcised in general and especially against the Gentiles.

Peter by eating with Cornelius had thus violated their religious creed in one of its most vital points and had shocked them beyond measure.

A breach of the Ten Commandments would not have been such a dreadful scandal in their view. Peter had eaten with and actually baptized one that was not in good standing in their race, and nothing could explain or palliate this heresy.

So these Jewish converts to Christianity had not yet gotten a glimpse of its splendid breadth and universality and were still shut in and blinded by their ancient orthodoxy and narrow bigotry.

They still thought they were the favorites of heaven and had a monopoly of its grace, and that all others were left to perish. Their church was the only true church and all outside its pale were irregular, heretical, and lost.

They were conscientious in their view, for they honestly believed that admitting Gentiles into the church would destroy Moses and sweep away their whole traditional religion.

Let us not think that this spirit expired when the last Pharisee or Judaistic Christian passed out of the world, drawing around him the robes of his sectarianism. It is still lurking in the church and is not always concealed. There are still Christians that claim a monopoly of divine grace in their church and brand all others as heretical.

And we do not need to go far to find this spirit; it may be lurking in our hearts and we need to examine ourselves and guard against it.

2. *Peter's Story of His Vision*

Peter himself had at first been of this Jewish way of thinking, not only when he was a Jew, but even after he became a Christian. He now told the story of his conversion to a broader view to these offended Jews.

His defense did not consist of a theological argument but was a plain narrative of facts.

On the flat roof of the house of Simon, the tanner, in Joppa as he lay one day at noon looking out over the blue Mediterranean and dreaming, he fell into a trance in which his eyes were opened to a wider vision of God's world. A great sheet was let down from heaven—may this burdened sheet have been the swollen sail of a Gentile ship in the offing?—in which were all manner of beasts and birds, and Peter was bidden to kill and eat.

He demurred on the ground that he had never eaten anything unceremoniously unclean, but the answer was returned to him, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

At that very hour three men from Cæsarea knocked at the door and called for Peter. The Spirit bade him go with these men, "making no distinction."

This was the very line of separation Peter had been drawing all his life long.

Heretofore he would not have eaten certain animals considered ceremoniously unclean, and for a like reason he would not have entered into fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles.

But now the vision and the voice caused the scales of Jewish narrowness to fall from his eyes, and he began dimly to see things in a new light.

Old distinctions and classes began to fade away, and a new and broader classification of men began to appear. Peter went with the Gentiles, and in doing this he crossed the border that separated old Jewish exclusiveness from new Christian universality.

That day Christian faith began to shake itself loose from the Jewish husk in which it had been nurtured and to scatter its golden grain out over the world.

3. His Account of the Conversion of Cornelius

Peter proceeded with his narrative and told what had happened in the house of Cornelius. The Roman officer had told his story of being directed by an angel to send for Peter, and Peter began to speak.

Then occurred a marvelous thing. "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning."

Peter up to that time would not have believed such a thing possible. He had thought that the Holy Spirit was the exclusive gift of God to the Jews and never dreamed that the same gift might be bestowed upon the Gentiles. But now he witnessed manifest evidence that the Spirit was descending on the Gentiles "even as on us at the beginning," and another blow was given to the distinction that had been so deeply rooted in his mind.

It is one of the blessed facts of the gospel that the Spirit of God is not a gift to a favored few or select class, but it is bestowed upon men of every race and class and condition.

The ancient promise was that the Spirit should be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28), and this promise was now being fulfilled before Peter's astonished eyes.

The same outpouring on a grander scale is now being witnessed in our day, and all the ends of the earth are being baptized by the Spirit of truth and grace.

Peter then remembered the saying of the Lord Jesus that "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit." He did not fully understand the saying of the Lord Jesus at the time, but now it began to blaze out in all its breadth and brightness.

Often Scripture is concealed from our eyes until some experience or providence brings out its splendor, as stars come out in the night, and then we "behold wondrous things out of the law."

And now Peter was ready to announce his conclusion. "If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?"

These rays of light and lines of evidence converged until they combined into such a flood of light and overwhelming proof that Peter could no longer hold to his old convictions, but his whole mind and heart gave way to the manifest universality of the grace of God.

He could not stand up in his puny strength against the purpose and power of God, and so he was swept from Jewish narrowness out into the infinite ocean of divine grace.

4. Effect of the Narrative

The effect of the narrative was decisive upon his prejudiced hearers. If Peter had entered upon a theological argument to try to convert them to his view, he probably would only have confirmed them in their position and exasperated them the more. But this plain recital of facts silently undermined their prejudices until the whole structure of their hereditary exclusiveness crumbled down.

"And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."

They could not resist the logic of events and withstand the manifest grace of God.

Their noisy clamor against Peter's irregularity and scandal in associating with Gentiles quieted down, they "held their peace," often a very hard thing to do, they grew attentive and receptive, as the narrative proceeded they were convinced and converted, and they ended with glorifying God that to the Gentiles he had also granted repentance unto life. The distinction between Jew and Gentile had suddenly been obliterated by common brotherhood in Christ.

It was a great day in the Christian church when this victory was won.

Had these Jewish Christians been able to fasten their view upon Christianity and bind it with the Mosaic law, it would have remained a Jewish sect and would never have reached us. This victory released it from its Judean crag where it was hatched and let it spread its wings for a worldwide flight.

We need to cherish and glory in this breadth of the gospel and proclaim it far and wide that to all men God hath granted repentance unto life.

5. Growth Through Controversy

We see how truth and the church grew through the discipline of controversy. The early church was disturbed and torn with discus-

sions and dissensions as to doctrine and polity so that the early centuries seem like an angry sea of strife.

And yet it was through these controversies that great doctrines were forged into shape and use, and never did Christianity have a more rapid growth and win mightier victories than during these stormy times.

The volcano that pours fiery streams of molten rock down its sides into the valleys is furnishing the material of rich soil that will one day grow green with verdure and blossom into flowers; and the snows and storms of winter are nursing the harvests of the summer. So have volcanic fires and winter snows fed the life of the church.

Controversy is never to be sought for its own sake and is to be avoided when this can be righteously done. But there are worse things than controversy.

Spiritual dullness and deafness and death are worse. The spirit of investigation and criticism, of revision and reconstruction, of unrest and evolution and revolution, may be the spirit of life in the church. These things show that Christian men are still alive and thinking.

Controversy is the collision of vital convictions forging and fusing their differences into broader harmony and higher unity.

Controversy is the weapon with which truth has won its victories in every field of knowledge and faith. Controversy is education. Controversy is courage. Controversy is conscience. Controversy is the martyr's blood that has sown the seed of richer harvests. The Bible is a book of controversy and rings with the sound of battle from the beginning to the end. Jehovah held a controversy with the Jews and Jesus with the Pharisees.

Controversy has been the travail and birth of all the great religious and scientific ideas that have been born into the world.

It is not necessarily a bad thing when the church is disturbed with controversy. It is sometimes necessary to think things through and fight them out, as in the case of prohibition.

Such differences when kept free from bitterness and conducted in a truth-seeking spirit may create a storm, but a storm that cleanses the sky and washes it blue and refreshes the grass into a more vivid green and leaves the atmosphere purer and sweeter.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Name some other critical periods in Christianity.
2. How had the Jews come to be so exclusive in their religion?
3. Is there a true narrowness as well as a true breadth in religion?
4. What are some of the dangers and evils of religious controversy?
5. Is the spirit of tolerance and brotherhood growing in the world?

LESSON IX—AUGUST 30

The Mission to Cyprus

Lesson: Acts 12:25–13:12.

Golden Text: I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Romans 1:16.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 42:6–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Missionary Adventures in Cyprus.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christianity at Court.

Additional Material: Acts 24:24–26; 26:1–32.

Lesson Text: Acts 12:25–13:1–12

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their attendant.

6 And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar Jesus;

7 Who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.

9 But Saul, who is also *called* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. A Call for Foreign Missionaries.

2. Two of the Ablest Men Chosen.

3. In the Island of Cyprus.
4. The Judgment upon the Jewish Sorcerer.
5. The Conversion of the Roman Governor.

A new chapter in this history now opens, not in Jerusalem, but in Antioch. Jerusalem was the seat of conservatism, and conservatism rarely initiates new ideas and movements.

The Holy Spirit had to start a new center of progress and found it in the more liberal Greek city of Antioch in Syria. The kingdom of God cannot be shut up within any particular place or church or creed, but breaks out in unexpected places and ways. Antioch, which gave birth to the first Gentile church, became the mother of foreign missions and of Gentile Christianity.

The gospel has a wonderful self-propagating fertility and energy, and every additional church becomes a new center for its farther spread.

1. A Call for Foreign Missionaries

That was a small but strong church down in Antioch; it had prophets and teachers that were men of spiritual genius and power. Two of them, Barnabas and Paul, were eminent leaders in the church at large and one of them, Manaen, was connected with an influential family in the political world.

The church has abundant room in it for the common people, but it must also get hold of the best brains. Not many mighty may be called, but some of them are and must be.

While the officers and members of this church were engaged in serving the Lord in worship, the Holy Spirit came upon them with a call for further service. Faithfulness in present duty is the opening way to enlargement. When the Lord wants a man for an important business he picks out one that is already busy. The man that is doing no good where he is would probably do no good anywhere.

The call of the Spirit was, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." A new line of work was about to be opened and men specially fitted had to be selected and set apart for this service. The principle of division of labor, which is so productive in the industrial world, is equally operative and fruitful in the spiritual field.

God does not send men into service indiscriminately, but he seeks to separate them and to put the right man in the right place. Every man has a divine calling that matches his personal gift and situation, and it is his business to find this field and do with his might what God has given him to do.

2. Two of the Ablest Men Chosen

How did the church receive this call? "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away."

Immediate obedience followed the call of the Spirit.

We might have expected some doubt and opposition to this course. Barnabas and Paul were easily the ablest two men in that church: how plausible and strong would be the plea that they should be kept at home? Was not Antioch a great city and center that ought to be seized and conquered for Christ first? And how could this be done if the ablest men and leaders were sent away? If the heart is weakened will not the whole body suffer?

If this policy was suggested, it did not prevail, but the divine call was trusted and followed.

The Spirit did pick out the strongest men in that church to send away as foreign missionaries, and this has been the divine policy to this day. The foreign field is no place for weak men: let the church send her strongest sons and most gifted daughters there. This has ever been done, and such names as David Livingstone and John G. Paton shine out like stars upon the pages of foreign missions.

It may have seemed a poor use and needless sacrifice of Paul to bury him in the obscurity and darkness of heathenism, but it was the same kind of sacrifice as that by which a grain of wheat falls into the ground to spring up a hundredfold, and Christian Europe is the magnificent fruit today.

3. In the Island of Cyprus

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Seleucia was the seaport of Antioch, twenty miles down the Orontes at its mouth. Possibly members of the church went with the departing missionaries as far as this

port, where they bade them farewell and saw them disappear on board a wheat ship on the blue Mediterranean.

The narrative interblends human and divine action, in one verse attributing their departure to the church and in the next verse to the Holy Spirit.

The Christian is in all things a coworker with God, so that he works and yet not he but God works in him.

They sailed westward, for this has been the course of empire in the spiritual as in the political world, until it has encircled the globe. John, whose surname was Mark, a young man who afterwards wrote the gospel bearing his name, was with them as an attendant. A sail of sixty miles brought them to Cyprus, celebrated for its copper mines from which is derived our word copper, the native island of Barnabas, where they began work.

They first preached the word of God to the Jews in their synagogues in accordance with their policy from the beginning.

They tried to find common ground on which to stand with others, they seized upon the good in the pagan world and used it as a point of approach and contact from which they could preach the gospel.

The missionaries worked their way westward through the island without anything of special note happening until they came to Paphos at its western extremity. Here lived the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus.

He was a man of serious thought and spiritual aspiration who hungered for something better than was offered by the effete Roman religions.

He was such a man as Cornelius, possibly another wild-growing saint out in the wilderness of the pagan world, and there appear to have been many such in the Roman Empire.

God has more souls waiting for him out in pagan twilight than we know or suspect.

When Sergius heard of the missionaries preaching a new message of salvation, he sent for them to come up to his palace and desired to hear the word of God. Here was a most unexpected and promising opening, and it must have been with great hope and gladness that Barnabas and Paul declared unto him the way of life.

Sergius was the key man in Cyprus and his conversion to the gospel would open a large door to Christianity in the island.

But an unexpected obstacle was also encountered in the palace. Lurking in the shadow of Sergius the missionaries found his evil spirit and tempter, one Bar-Jesus, a sorcerer. He was an apostate Jew who had gone into the business of fortune telling and magic. This Jew fastened on Sergius, and by working on his fears had got him under his hypnotic power.

When he saw that Sergius was listening to the missionaries and that he was likely to lose so profitable a customer and victim he used all his cunning and lying arts to discredit the preachers and turn the proconsul away from the new faith.

Thus the first missionary campaign soon struck a rock, and missions always have been and will be a battle with evil.

Various kinds of sorcerers swarmed in the Roman Empire and fattened on its decadent religions, and they are still found in all lands, Christian but especially pagan.

4. The Judgment upon the Jewish Sorcerer

Up to this point the narrative always speaks of Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas was the older Christian and the more softly tempered man, and Saul was the younger man and more fiery spirit. It was proper, therefore, that Barnabas should stand as the head of the mission. But at this point Saul forges ahead and takes the Roman form of his name, as was proper now that they were on definitely Roman ground, and hereafter the narrative speaks of Paul and Barnabas.

It was not by virtue of any self-seeking and pushing on his part that Paul did this, but by virtue of his superior personality and power as a missionary.

He was the stronger man and was bound to come to the front. Ability generally sooner or later rises to its proper level and comes to its own. When Paul saw this sorcerer coiling himself like a serpent around Sergius, the fire within him burned and burst forth in volcanic wrath and retribution. He unmasked his smooth villainies, branded him whose name was Son of Saviour (Bar-Jesus) as a son of the devil and an enemy

of all righteousness, and charged him with perverting the right ways of the Lord.

Of course Elymas as a Jew had apostasized from the true light and religion and had prostituted his knowledge and ability to the worst evil, and this greatly aggravated his guilt.

Then Paul pronounced judgment upon him. Immediately blindness smote the apostate Jew and he presented a pitiful spectacle as he went feeling about seeking some one to lead him.

This realistic touch is one of the undesigned marks of truth that cannot be invented or imitated and certifies to the authenticity of the narrative.

The judgment was severe but fitting.

Trying to blind another, he was blinded himself. He fell into his own pit he had digged for another, and with what judgment we judge we shall be judged.

Those who are deliberately trying to mislead others for gain are likely to fall under their own evil arts until they actually come to believe in and be misled and destroyed by their own cunning and falsity.

5. The Conversion of the Roman Governor

In contrast with the fate of Elymas stands the blessing of Sergius. When the proconsul saw what was done, he believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

The gospel of Christ brought him new light and love that matched his mind and warmed his heart.

His aspiration after truth and life now found air and light in which it could live and grow. The fetid atmosphere loaded with the misasma of many old outworn Roman faiths and strange Oriental cults that had come swarming into the Roman world was stifling to a wholesome religious instinct, and religious life was dying in his day.

Yet the religious nature of man was still alive and was crying out for living truth and grace.

The gospel came as a fresh breeze and shower of rain to the parched land and gave instant life and hope to the weary heart of that sated

world. The Lord Jesus was revealed to Sergius as a Saviour who would bear the burden of his sin and at last receive him into glory. No wonder such a revelation astonished him and that he believed.

Here was a case in which the Jew, who was first in hereditary privilege, was last in blessing. The Jew was shut out and the Gentile entered in. It is true that the blindness of Elymas was probably temporary, as is intimated in verse 11, and he may have yet seen the true light, for spiritual blindness may always be cured.

The gospel has its doctrines and deeds that should astonish us and lead us to believe.

We must indeed be dull of mind and slow of heart if we do not see abundant works in the history of Christianity which are good ground for astonishment and faith in the Lord Jesus. Salvation through Christ is the greatest wonder in the universe, and the very angels desire to look into it.

How often did Jesus warn the Jews that publicans and sinners would enter the kingdom of God before them? Here is this Scripture being fulfilled.

If we will only cast out every evil thought that would turn us away from Christ we shall surely believe with exceeding joy.

Thus the very first foreign mission, although it encountered opposition, yet also won a signal victory by stepping up into the palace of a Roman governor and gaining an influential convert, and the history of this movement has its shining pages to this hour.

It has been a quiet and steady march, unattended with flags and drums, arms and armaments, pageantry and pomp, and yet it has appealed to and drawn into its service some of the noblest spirits of our human kind and they have wrought deeds of glory compared with which many more noisy and noted achievements are as dust.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Is the foreign missionary spirit in the Old Testament?
2. Why did Jesus not go out into foreign countries?
3. How old are our modern foreign missions?
4. What are the special calls and promises of this work today?
5. What are some outstanding achievements of foreign missions?

LESSON X—SEPTEMBER 6

Turning to the Gentiles

Lesson: Acts 13:13–52; Romans 1:14–16; 11:1–24.

Golden Text: I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 13:47.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 72:6–13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Opening a New Field.

Topic for Young People and Adults: A Light unto the Gentiles.

Lesson Text: Acts 13:42–52; Romans 1:14–16

42 And as they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next sabbath.

43 Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.

46 And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*,

> I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles,
> That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth.

48 And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

14 I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Paul and Barnabas in Antioch in Pisidia.

2. An After-Meeting.

3. A Great Congregation.

4. Turning from the Jews.
5. To the Gentiles.
6. The Missionaries Expelled from the Town.
7. Not Ashamed of the Gospel.

The work in Cyprus was now done and Paul and Barnabas pushed on to new fields, crossing over to Asia Minor and landing at Perga. At this point Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.

The fact is stated without explanation or comment, but we know that Paul disapproved of Mark's course and afterward this matter separated Paul and Barnabas (15:37–38), Barnabas and Mark being cousins (Col. 4:10).

So the first missionary movement was marred with human imperfection and dissension, and divine grace has not yet eliminated this element from our work.

Whether Mark was wholly wrong in this affair we do not know, but we may suspect he lacked the perseverance and pluck that should hold the missionary to his task. If he was at fault he afterwards nobly redeemed himself.

Paul and Barnabas did not stop at Perga, but passed on up into the interior highlands. As it was now midsummer it was dangerous to stay on the hot, fever-infected plains, and this may have been the reason for pressing on into a cooler and more salubrious region.

1. Paul and Barnabas in Antioch in Pisidia

Their first stopping-place was Antioch in Pisidia. This was a considerable city whose ruins yet remain. There was a Jewish synagogue in the place, and, in accordance with their method of campaigning, the missionaries attended its service on the Sabbath. It was the custom in the synagogue to ask strangers present to speak, and, the invitation having been given, Paul stood up and lifted his hand in that characteristic gesture of his that was so effective in commanding attention (21:40). He then addressed the audience in a speech that is a masterpiece of logical persuasion.

The point of his argument is that Jesus was their promised Messiah.

In a rapid but exceedingly graphic sketch he traced the leading features of Hebrew history up to David, at which point he skilfully introduced Jesus as the promised seed of David and Saviour of men.

The whole history of the nation in which the Jews had such intense pride was thus concentrated and massed behind Jesus as their own Messiah; he was presented to them as the outflowering and fulfilment of all their hopes.

And equally Jesus is the fulfilment of all our hopes.

2. An After-Meeting

Having concluded his address, Paul with Barnabas passed out of the synagogue, and some of the Jews and devout proselytes, who were pagan converts to Judaism, followed them and entered into conversation with them.

They had felt the force of Paul's argument and wanted to know more about Jesus as their promised Messiah.

Paul held a kind of after-meeting or inquiry meeting with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. This is a good way of following up the effect of preaching and gathering in its results.

Public preaching often produces in hearers convictions and resolutions which are lost because there are no immediate opportunity and pressure to crystallize them into action.

The hearers pass out into their old life and presently these good desires and intentions fade away. Mr. Moody reaped his great harvests in the inquiry room, and some of our most successful evangelists and pastors hold after-meetings for consulting with those desiring more light and leading. The Sunday school teacher can often after the class speak to a scholar a private word that may deepen the impression of the lesson and lead to action.

Many a general has lost a battle by not following up the first successful attack, and the Christian worker needs to be a good soldier and use every means of winning victories for Christ.

3. A Great Congregation

The news of the sensational sermon of the stranger in the synagogue spread through the city and the next Sabbath there was a great congregation present.

Doubtless mixed motives drew the crowd.

Many came from curiosity, and some from a sincere desire to know more about Jesus the Christ. Anything strange or novel in a church, a new preacher or a stir of revival interest, will increase attendance, and, whatever the motives, the opportunity should be seized for pressing the truth upon all hearers.

When the Jews saw the multitudes they bristled up with opposition and spoke out against the teachings of Paul and grew abusive. What was the cause of their anger?

The popularity of the strange preachers had something to do with it.

It is hard to see our rivals surpassing us in popularity and success, and even ministers of religion are human enough to wince under such an experience. The scribes in this synagogue were very human, and they tried to turn the tide against the new preachers.

A deeper root of their opposition was their belief that the new teaching was revolutionary and destructive of their faith.

Although Paul based his whole argument on the Jewish Scriptures and showed them that the gospel, instead of destroying the religion of Moses, was its fulfilment and perfect blossom, yet the scribes thought that so radical a change was a dangerous doctrine, and all their traditional orthodoxy and pride flamed up in wrath against it. And in fact, the transition from Judaism to Christianity was so great and even violent that we do not wonder that it was hard for the Jews to turn from the old to the new faith.

Very much slighter changes in our day meet with suspicion and opposition. Yet truth is ever growing, and we should be ready to see and accept its larger messages when they come.

4. Turning from the Jews

Paul and Barnabas were not men to be intimidated or discouraged by opposition and wrath.

There are times when Christian ministers and missionaries must stand up for truth and speak out at any risk and cost.

These missionaries were not behind any martyrs the world has ever seen in bravery and boldness. They declared to the Jews that it was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken unto them. This necessity was based on divine commands (Luke 24:47), and grew out of the fact that the Jews were the natural and rightful heirs of the gospel.

It was the development and fulfilment of their ancestral faith, and they were prepared to understand and receive it and were the appointed channels through which it was to flow out into the world.

The gospel was to begin with the Jews, but it was not to stop with them, and Paul proceeded to show them the next step. "Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles:" and Paul justified this course with a conclusive quotation from their own Scriptures.

The religion of the Jews was never given to them as their exclusive privilege, though for generations they had cherished this false thought.

They were called as a chosen people that they might first be saved themselves and then through them this saving truth and grace might go out unto the ends of the earth. Having refused to receive the truth themselves, they could not thwart the grace of God, and the gospel was immediately given to the Gentiles.

If we do not improve our privileges, they will be taken from us and be given to those that will appreciate and use them. The selfishness that would withhold from others the blessings that God has given us may bring upon us judgment that will take away even that which we have.

5. To the Gentiles

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God. The Jews were filled with envy and blasphemy, but the Gentiles were glad and glorified the truth.

Here are the different ways in which the same message may be received by different classes of hearers.

As the same sunlight melts wax and hardens clay, so the same truth may touch one heart into tenderness and faith and turn another towards hardness and unbelief. The same sermon may convert some souls and send others away scoffing.

Hearing is serious business and on how we hear may depend vital issues of life and life itself. "Take heed how ye hear."

The Gentiles were not only glad, but they also glorified the word of the Lord: they praised the truth and turned it into such gracious deeds and beautiful character as reflected the glory of God himself as flowers and sunsets reflect the glory of the sun. The purest saint can add nothing to the inherent glory of God, as the most perfect mirror can add nothing to the brightness of the sun. But as even a bit of broken glass can reflect a beam of the sun's brightness, so a very imperfect Christian can reflect some of the beauty of Christ.

Out of those that heard the gospel that day "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The word here translated "ordained" means arranged, disposed, assigned a place as in an army, and it does not imply whether this ordaining was done by God or by the converts themselves.

Both of these views are true, for every one must work out his own salvation and yet it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do his good pleasure.

6. The Missionaries Expelled from the Town

The success of the missionaries in winning converts among the Gentiles only exasperated the Jews the more, and so they cast around for some more effective way of stopping their work. They stirred up the wealthy and influential women in the synagogue, the religious and social leaders in the Jewish society of the city, to make it hot for the missionaries.

They got the women after them!

These wily ecclesiastics knew that if they could set the women on the hated preachers their stay in the city would be short.

The leading men of the Jews were also led to take a part in this movement; very likely it was represented to them that if this thing went on,

it would injure business and get them into trouble with the Roman government.

Get men to think that religion is interfering with business and they will try to frighten the preachers and stop any such work.

Passion rose to such a heat that it flamed into persecution, and Paul and Barnabas were driven out of town. They shook the dust off their feet against the Jews in that city, thus indicating that the blame was thrown on them, and went on to the next town.

Persecution, however, did not stop the preaching of the gospel, and the word of the Lord spread abroad throughout that whole region. Scattering embers of a fire may not put out but may spread the conflagration through the entire city. Persecution instead of stopping the gospel has usually scattered it far and wide. The worst way we can try to stop error is to persecute it, for this arouses its own spirit and awakens sympathy with it and may thus spread the very thing we are trying to suppress.

Truth and grace are the reasonable and right means to use in propagating the gospel, and other means are likely to do more harm than good.

Paul and Barnabas were expelled from this city, but "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." The missionaries were probably chased out stoned and bleeding, but they left behind them peace and joy.

The proper fruits of the gospel everywhere are joy and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and if we manifest these graces we know that we are Christians indeed.

7. Not Ashamed of the Gospel

No wonder that Paul wrote the passage in our lesson from his Epistle to the Romans.

Every word of it was the vibrant utterance of his experience.

He found that he owed the gospel both to Greeks and to Barbarians, to the wise and to the foolish, and he was not ashamed of such a gospel

for it wrought salvation in all souls, cultured and illiterate, wise or foolish, and everywhere it was the power of God unto salvation.

So is it today, proved to be such in our experience as truly as with Paul and we should glory in it.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What are some of the obstacles that foreign missionaries now meet?
2. Why can we influence inquirers better in private than in public?
3. May very imperfect motives lead us towards the kingdom of God?
4. What draws a great congregation?
5. Should we turn from those that will not receive the gospel to those that will?

LESSON XI—SEPTEMBER 13

Some Missionary Experiences

Lesson: Acts 14; Ephesians 6:10–20.

Golden Text: Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:10.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 50:4–9.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Hardships of Missionaries.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christianity Facing other Religions.

Lesson Text: Acts 14:8–23

8 And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speaking: who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked.

11 And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.

13 And the priest of Jupiter whose *temple* was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes.

14 But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is:

16 Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways.

17 And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.

19 But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

20 But as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch,

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Paul and Barnabas Worshiped as Gods.*
2. *The False Worship Rejected.*
3. *The True Worship Preached.*
4. *A Startling Change in the Scene.*
5. *The Missionaries Return.*

Paul and Barnabas, having been driven out of Antioch, went on to Iconium, sixty miles to the southeast, where they labored several months with similar success in gaining converts, followed by still more violent persecution, and again they fled. Their next station was Lystra, twenty-five miles farther southeast, where the same experience was repeated.

1. Paul and Barnabas Worshiped as Gods

At this town Paul wrought a work of healing, when a cripple at his command leaped to his feet.

The wonder created a great sensation and was followed with unexpected and astonishing results.

The multitude cried out that the gods were come down among them in the likeness of men, and they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury; and presently the priest of Jupiter appeared with oxen and garlands to offer them sacrifice.

The whole performance was idolatrous and superstitious in its outer form, but it was deeply religious in its inner spirit.

The fundamental roots of religion are here uncovered out on heathen soil. These rough pagan mountaineers believed in religion. The world was not simply so much brute matter to them, but it was alive with divine spirit. Their gods were many, yet they had some conception of a supreme being in Jupiter. These people had something to look up to; their sky was not empty, but contained a Father's face.

Next, they believed that their gods could come down to them in the likeness of men; their deity was not a far-off unknowable God that kept himself forever hidden from men, but he manifested himself in

human form to them. They expected a revelation and an incarnation: these were not foreign ideas and hopes to their thoughts.

And, finally, they believed in sacrifice and worship; they felt the need of divine propitiation, atonement for sin was an element in their religion. They gave of their substance to these sacrifices and engaged in public worship.

Here we have the main roots of religion and of Christianity itself; all these roots need is to have the light of truth and the rains of divine grace to fall upon them and they will grow and blossom.

The apostles did not have to create a religious nature in the heathen, for they found it already there waiting for them as seeds wait for the summer. Religion is not the product of any priestly or human invention, but it is the unfolding of a native capacity in man and is as universal, natural and necessary as physical hunger or affectional craving. It is not like a rare plant that grows only on some lonely mountain top, but it is like grass that grows all over the world. It everywhere precedes the Christian missionary and waits for him; and it is not his business to try to dig it up and destroy it, but to let the light in upon it, as Paul did at Athens, and water it that it may sprout and bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

These Lystrans were feeling in their dim way after God if haply they might find him, and they found him in Christ. And so shall every soul be blessed that seeks the Father's face. Heathen worshipers set us an example at many points and often put us to shame.

2. The False Worship Rejected

How did Paul and Barnabas receive this offered tribute of worship?

Here was a great opportunity for self-seeking vain men. If popularity was the aim and price of their preaching, it was here offered them in unbounded measure. Plausible reasons could have been urged why they should lend some encouragement to these misguided but well-meaning people. Might not the missionaries thus get these pagans more thoroughly under their influence and then more effectively do them good?

There are few temptations so dangerous and fatal to a preacher as an itching for popularity.

Of course public esteem is a powerful instrument for good with ministers, and there are legitimate ways of gaining it; but when it becomes a self-conscious aim and pursuit and passion that resorts to meretricious means and degenerates into blatant sensationalism, it is vanity and folly that soon run their course. But some ministers are very human and like to be worshiped, or to receive adulation that approaches divine deference.

Paul and Barnabas made short work with such worship on this occasion.

When they heard what was going on, they rent their clothes after the Oriental fashion, rushed out among the people and called upon them to stop. " Sirs," they cried, " why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God."

This was a brave speech that stamped these missionaries with a greatness they never would have attained had they permitted themselves to be worshiped as Gods.

Paul and Barnabas would not sail under false colors or palm themselves off as something they were not. They would not allow themselves to be dressed up in any fictitious reputation, though it made them shine; they would not tolerate any veneering or gilding on their character, but they let their true worth show its plain but genuine wood which was solid all the way through. Popularity and power were no temptation to them; they were simply bearers of good tidings who did not come to receive greatness but to give grace. False reputation, which so many are willing to assume and even seek, is but a bubble that is sure to burst.

Reality is the only substantiality.

Every one should disclaim fictitious worth and strip off all assumed airs and simply be himself. That they are but men of like passions with others is a wholesome fact for ministers and all Christians to remember.

We are but servants and messengers and are to let our light shine so that others, seeing our good works, will forget us and glorify, not us, but our Father who is in heaven.

3. The True Worship Preached

The missionaries, having thus diverted attention from themselves, now turned the minds of the people to the living God and instead of their vain things they gave them bread.

Christianity never calls upon people, even pagans, to give up any part of their possessions without giving them some better thing in its stead.

It cuts off dead branches and poisonous parasites only that it may let the tree of faith grow up and bear the fruits of eternal life. Religion robs us of no real good, but enlarges and enriches us, lifting our vision from the lowly earth to the lofty sky. It may take from us many a dead idol, but only that it may give us the living God. Even when our best hopes are disappointed it is because God has provided for us some better thing.

If we have to give up old truth that is precious to us, it is that larger truth may take its place.

Paul was the preacher of this sermon, and its style is unmistakably his own. In preaching to the Jews he had quoted their Scriptures and proved his points from the Psalms; but in preaching to the Gentiles to whom these Scriptures were unknown, he quoted from the older Bible of nature, which is read and known of all men, and appealed to heaven and earth and sea as witnesses to God and his goodness.

God's Word and his works were written by the same hand and they agree on spiritual matters.

Sunshine and seed and shower, bee and blossom, preach the same gospel of divine wisdom and beneficence as Isaiah and John. Jesus chose many of his texts and illustrations from the flower-embroidered field and the bird-inhabited air, and made all nature eloquent of God.

The world of nature in which we live has for us been inconceivably enlarged and glorified in comparison with what it appeared to be to these ancient observers, star and system now stretching their expanse beyond our utmost vision and imagination, but it still is the ever-speaking appeal of Mind to mind, of the Father to his children.

It falls far short of the fulness and clearness of the gospel, but it tells us enough to restrain us from irreverence and unbelief and from many a sin and to turn our souls to the living God.

4. A Startling Change in the Scene

It would be hard to find in all literature a more sudden and startling change and contrast than that which meets us at this point in the narrative. In one verse we are told that these missionaries scarcely restrained the people from worshiping them as gods, and in the next verse we read that one of them was stoned by these same people and left for dead: so fickle is the human heart, so unsubstantial and evanescent is popularity.

History is full of such irony.

Dean Stanley mourned the decline of his literary popularity and sadly admitted that "the days when my books ran through edition after edition are past and gone." Of Lord Brougham, Lord Chancellor of England, it is recorded that while he "flourished there was no greater personality, but as he fell into the sere and yellow leaf he shrank and shrank till little beyond his egotism and ill temper remained to him." Napoleon fell as a star madly from his high sphere to a lonely rock in mid-ocean and was left to perish miserably there. The Great War lifted to a high station and blazing popularity more than one leader who has since fallen into deep obscurity with none so poor as to do him reverence.

Of all men the popularity of ministers is generally the most short-lived, and the occupant of a prominent pulpit today may be forgotten tomorrow. The man that is almost worshiped at one time may be presently execrated.

Popularity is a poor thing to trust in and live on, and whoever seeks and finds it may find it a shadow.

We first saw Paul lending a helping hand at the stoning of Stephen, and here he is getting a taste of his own medicine. Paul stoned Christians to make them Jews, but he never stoned Jews to make them Christians. Christianity makes no converts with the sword.

Paul was a greater man when others were stoning him than when he was stoning others.

When a brutal soldier lifted his sword over Milton, saying, "I have power to kill you," the scholar and poet replied, "And I have power to be killed and to despise the murderer." It is greater and better to be stoned ourselves than to stone others.

We may broadly divide people into two classes: wrong-doers and

wrong-sufferers, and it is more blessed to be in the latter than in the former class.

These Jews that stirred up this persecution against Paul followed him all the way from Antioch to Lystra.

Some people will go a great way to pay off a grudge, and spite often has a long memory.

5. The Missionaries Return

Paul was down but he was not dead, and as his friends stood around him he rose up and went back into the city. Good men often fall and their enemies seem to have triumphed over them, but wait and see: the end is not yet and the Lord will lift them up or will put other men in their places and their work will go on.

The victory of evil is short-lived, and truth crushed to earth will rise again.

Paul and Barnabas now passed on to Derbe, the farthest point reached in this journey, and then traveled back over their route through Asia Minor to their starting-point in Antioch in Syria, confirming their converts and exhorting them to continue in the faith. Paul did not convert people and then let them run loose, but he kept track of them and wrote to them again and again that he might keep them in the faith.

Here is a point where we often fail and suffer much waste and loss in our work. We should follow up our converts and keep what we get.

Paul also appointed elders in every church, he organized these little churches with officers to administer them.

No movement can go far and last long that does not organize itself into order and authority.

Great as is the danger of organization that it may become a harness or husk that may constrict the life of the spirit out of it, yet it is necessary as are the bones of an animal to give it shape and working order and efficiency.

Elders and other officers are needed in the church, but having appointed them Paul " prayed with fasting," and in such a church the spirit will abide.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What good is there in pagan religions today?
2. If there is good in such religions, why do we send missionaries to pagan lands?
3. Can and ought we always to find some common ground with those from whom we differ?
4. When ought we not to care for loss of popularity?
5. How can we guard against the dangers of organization in the church?

LESSON XII—SEPTEMBER 20

The Council in Jerusalem

Lesson: Acts 15:1–35; Galatians 2.

Golden Text: For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. Galatians 5:13.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:1–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Christian Freedom.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christianity at the Crossroads.

Lesson Text: Acts 15:22–29; Galatians 2:1–2, 9–10

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

23 And they wrote *thus* by them, The apostles and the elders, brethren, unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting:

24 Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment;

25 It seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

29 That ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

1 Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me.

2 And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.

9 And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision;

10 Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. *Controversy Over Circumcision Renewed at Antioch.*
2. *Conference as the Solution of the Difficulty.*
3. *The Council in Session in Jerusalem.*
4. *The Decision of the Council.*

We have seen the problem of the relation of Christianity to Judaism working out its solution along the line of this history.

At first the Christian Jews supposed that Christianity was only an advanced form of Judaism and that all the Mosaic rites were still in force.

The Gentiles were not supposed to have any part in the new as in the old form of faith and any place in the Christian church.

Peter had his eyes opened down at Cæsarea when he received Cornelius and baptized him into the new faith, and this precipitated a council at Jerusalem when it was decided that " to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life " (Lesson VIII).

However the question did not stay settled, for the Judaizers next made the demand that while the Gentiles could be received into the church they must be circumcised and thus the old yoke of Judaism be fastened on the Gentiles, an impossible demand that would have effectually closed the door of Christianity and of the church to them.

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey back to their home base in Antioch in Syria, they were confronted with this demand and this resulted in the second council in Jerusalem where the problem came to its crisis and received its decisive settlement.

At this second council the new Christian faith was fully freed from the shell of the old Judaistic faith and permitted to spread its wings for universal flight.

This council was the most critical hour in the history of the Christian church. A wrong decision would have kept Christianity a Jewish sect; the right decision made it a world religion.

1. Controversy over Circumcision Renewed in Antioch

The Judaistic party at Jerusalem, that had been antagonistic to the policy of admitting Gentiles to the church all along, were freshly alar ned

at the wide incursion of Paul and Barnabas into Gentile territory and free extension of the church among the uncircumcised and saw that decisive action must be taken. "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (15:1). This is akin to but not just the same question that was decided at the first council in Jerusalem (chapter 11) which we studied in Lesson VIII.

There the question was, Shall Gentile converts be admitted to the Christian church? Here the question is, Shall they be admitted without being circumcised?

Defeated at one point, these Judaizers are bringing up practically the same issue in another form.

We must try to put ourselves in the place of these Judaizers and see the situation from their point of view.

It seemed to them that the admission of the Gentiles into the church without circumcision was destructive of the whole system of Moses that had been consecrated by more than a thousand years of glorious history. This was a terrible wrench and shock to their orthodox consciences, and we may well appreciate if not sympathize with their sore experience.

Yet however conscientious they were, they were not blameless in their blindness to the breadth and liberty of the gospel.

Paul calls them "false brethren privily brought in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Gal. 2:4). Pharisees before conversion, the Pharisaic spirit clung to them after conversion. Conservatism in them had crystallized into fixity and finality. They were narrow rigid literalists who could see no room for growth and progress and could tolerate no difference of opinion.

And so they went about among the brethren as spies and heresy hunters, stirring up dissension and subverting souls. We all have a comfortable feeling that we embody the closest approximation of truth that has yet been reached and that others are right in proportion as they agree with us.

This narrow spirit has troubled the church from the beginning and has split it into a thousand fragments. Loyalty to truth is a

great virtue, but it becomes schismatic and a menace when some men's sense of truth is set up as a standard of orthodoxy and condition of salvation for others.

2. Conference as the Solution of the Difficulty

How was this controversy carried on and settled? It might have been conducted so as to have torn the church in Antioch and the church at large to pieces and have left warring fragments that soon would have perished from the world.

But a more excellent way was found and followed that brought peace and saved the church and Christianity.

"The brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." "And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter" (15:2, 6). They did not fight it out to the bitter end, but they came together for a friendly conference. They sat down together and talked it over and came to a decision with unexpected unanimity.

Conference is far more effective in settling disputes than controversy.

Controversy heats the blood and intensifies and inflames points of opposition, but conference cools passion and emphasizes points of agreement.

In all our differences we should strive to come together to consider the matter. Most family dissensions and church troubles and lawsuits and labor strikes and wars could be peaceably settled if the opposing parties would come together and consider the matter, glance starward as the word means, and under the light of an upward look get a wider horizon and a broader common view.

Is not the League of Nations and the World Court an effort to come together and consider the great affairs and difficulties of the world?

Everything depends on the spirit in which the members of such a conference meet. If they come together to convict one another of wrong, they will not unite; but if they come together to agree on the right, they will find a point of unity and peace.

3. The Council in Session in Jerusalem

The delegates to this conference, having arrived in Jerusalem, were received of the church and they told their story of God's doings among the Gentiles. They were again confronted with the demand of the Judaistic Christians that the Gentiles be circumcised and the law of Moses be imposed upon them.

The Council then met and the different views were considered.

The substance of these speeches is recorded (15:6–21). Peter was the first speaker. He reviewed the circumstances of his own conversion to the principle of liberty and protested against putting on the Gentiles the yoke that the Jews themselves were unwilling to bear.

A great silence then fell on the council as Paul and Barnabas rose to speak.

The exploits of these men had made them illustrious and they had come back as generals from a great victory or as explorers and pioneers who had added a new continent to the domain of Christianity. They told the story of their famous campaign and rehearsed the wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles.

Then James, the brother of Jesus and head of the church in Jerusalem, spoke. He was a sympathizer with, if not a supporter of, the Judaistic party (Gal. 2:12) and might have been expected to oppose Peter and Paul.

But he took strong ground in favor of Gentile liberty and quoted from the prophets to prove his position.

The principle of universal salvation was in the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:2) all the while, but the Jews did not see it until the light of the gospel fell on its pages and brought it out in luminous lines.

Thus the council brought these brethren into agreement and consolidated the church in the principle and policy of universal salvation with freedom from the ceremonial law of Moses. The church was saved from provincialism and schism and a great victory was won that day; not violent controversy but brotherly conference did it.

In this council we see the beginning of general church government and it will be differently interpreted by different observers. The Roman

Catholic sees in it the first Ecumenical Council, and Protestants are likely to see in it the first meeting of their general assembly or conference or association.

It was none of these in form, but it was all of them in germ.

The church did not start out with any inspired form of government, but it developed forms and offices and politics out of its own circumstances and necessities, as mollusks secrete their own shells.

Any form of church government that has upon it the stamp of adaptation and efficiency is good and vindicates itself.

4. The Decision of the Council

We now come to the decision of the council contained in the letter which is the subject of our lesson and which can be understood only in the light of the preceding history which has been given.

This letter has been preserved for us and is one of the most important documents in the history of Christianity.

It is the Magna Charta of our right as Gentiles to share in the salvation of Christ without coming under the bondage of Mosaic ceremony.

This letter literally opened the door wide for us and all the world to enter the church and the kingdom of God on earth.

The letter consists of an introduction, giving the history of the matter, and a resolution or exhortation stating the decision.

It first addresses the Gentiles as brethren, and this in itself is a notable fact and victory and carried with it the whole case of the liberal party.

It took the Jews a long time to come to the point of calling the Gentiles brethren, but they at last learned this lesson. When we sincerely view others from whom we are separated as brethren we shall not long be divided from them, and this spirit will in itself go far towards healing our differences and binding us into unity.

The letter next repudiates the troublers that had subverted men's souls.

These heresy hunters had gone out of their way on their own account and out of their church or parish in order to disturb others, and church

troubles in our day are often caused by people that take it upon themselves to stir up matters that they should let alone.

Next, the letter strongly commands "our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

These were the men that the Judaizers were striking at, and here is their complete vindication.

Finally, in the name of the Holy Spirit the letter lays upon the Gentiles "no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well."

There are here some elements of compromise and wise psychology.

For one thing and surprisingly enough, the matter of circumcision is not mentioned at all. It is clearly ruled out by the express provisions of the letter, but it is quietly dropped, the purpose being not to rub and irritate unnecessarily this sore spot in the minds of the Judaizers.

The point in dispute was settled indirectly but none the less effectively with as little express publicity as possible, and thus the Judaizers were offered an easy way out of their untenable position with as little offense as possible.

Further elements of compromise were that while the Gentiles were released from the ceremonial laws of Moses yet they were to have regard for the prejudices and feelings of the Jews and were not wantonly to offend them in their social practices. They were advised to abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, for these gave offense to the Jewish Christians. They were not things wrong in themselves, but the Judaizing Christians thought them wrong, and this was reason enough why the Gentiles should abstain from them.

The old prejudices and feelings of the Jewish Christians were thus respected and they were not needlessly offended.

The compromise granted them something, and the liberals did not exact their "pound of flesh" from them, but they were enabled "to save their face," as we would say.

In settling difficulties in brotherly conference, we must not demand everything, but concede much and meet others halfway on common ground.

But the grand point in this compromise was that there was no division of the church, neither party sought to exclude the other, but room was found for both, and the unity of the church was maintained.

The moral law of Moses, however, remained and stands to this day as one of the things that cannot be shaken.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Recall and state again the questions at issue in these two councils.
2. Can you give reasons for thinking that Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians between the first and the second council?
3. How far should we go along the line of expediency in settling disputes in the church and out of it?
4. What are the dangers connected with religious controversies?
5. Can all Christians be of one mind in doctrinal matters?

LESSON XIII—SEPTEMBER 27

Review: The Spread of Christianity in Asia

Golden Text: They rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. Acts 14:27.

Devotional Reading: Matthew 13:31–33.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Early Christian Triumphs.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christianity Becomes a World Religion.

The Third Quarter carries us from the epochal day of Pentecost to the conclusion of the settlement of the momentous question of the reception of Gentiles into the Christian church without being subject to the Mosaic ritual.

It was a great time in which critical issues were happily settled and Christianity was safely launched upon the Gentile sea as a world religion.

1. The Gift of the Holy Spirit

We are all disposed to wish to pry into secret things that we cannot know or it would not be best for us to know, and Jesus had repeatedly to bear with the disciples in their impatient demand to know what was wisely concealed from them.

But they were given a plain practical work to do in bearing witness to him in the world.

The day of Pentecost was the first public preaching assembly and test of the gospel after the ascension of Jesus and it was a wonderful surprise and demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

All the human conditions were ready in that the disciples were all in one place with one accord and upon such unanimity and spiritual receptivity the Spirit was poured in a plenitude of power.

2. The Preaching of the Apostles

The morning after Pentecost we find Peter and John going up into the temple to pray as though the old dispensation of Moses with its

temple and ritual were still in operation, whereas it was already superseded and numbered among the things that were shaken.

Peter wrought a miracle of healing and preached to the gathered crowd, with the result that he was arrested and hurried off to jail.

However such persecution had the usual effect of spreading the truth and the gospel showed its power by increasing the three thousand converts of Pentecost to five thousand.

Opposition drives convictions into earnest souls deeper and makes them more masterful.

The arrested Galilean preachers were brought before the court in the morning, and Peter stood forth as their spokesman and made a defense in which he drove pointed truth home upon his judges and charged them with having crucified their own Messiah.

The effect of the sermon was great beyond expectation.

The very judges marveled and " took knowledge of " of these " unlearned and ignorant men " " that they had been with Jesus."

This is ever the best evidence of our Christian faith and is a testimony and demonstration that we can all offer.

3. Social Service in the Early Church

We meet in this early church with an experiment in communism that is interesting. The disciples put all their possessions in a common store and dispensed them to the members as they had need.

It was a splendid outburst of Christian brotherhood, but it was their own affair and not binding on us, and in fact it does not seem to have worked well very long with them, as it appears that they had reduced themselves to poverty so that presently we find other churches taking up collections for these very people.

In the heart of this Christian brotherhood they planted the resurrection of Christ as its true root and cause, and this central fact is still the power of the gospel unto salvation.

Prosperity has its dangers and " when the disciples were multiplied " dissension arose.

The trouble was over the distribution of the charitable funds, and to this day church funds give no small amount of trouble and we need to be careful of how we manage them. The trouble, however, resulted in the creation of a new office in the church to take care of such matters, and deacons were appointed for this purpose.

This is an instance and illustration of how all offices in the church arose, each one being created to meet some practical need and emergency.

It was thus that the social gospel grew and ministered to the poor. All this social service was sowing good seed that yielded a larger harvest.

4. Christianity Spread by Persecution

Stephen, one of the seven deacons, soon loomed up as one of the most powerful preachers of the early church.

His zeal brought him to his death by stoning, the first martyr of the Christian church.

In the background of the bloody business stood Saul guarding the clothes of the murderers and "consenting unto his death."

Thus rose the star, red as blood, of this man who afterwards became the most powerful preacher of the faith he had sought to destroy.

Saul's zeal was infectious and he inaugurated a reign of terror in Jerusalem. The Christian believers generally fled the city, but the apostles held their ground.

Persecution spread the flames and a spark in the person of Philip lighted in Samaria and there kindled a fire of revival. The violent explosion up at Jerusalem spread sparks all around the Mediterranean shore and Antioch took fire with the new faith and became an important center of Christian propaganda. It was a plague spot with its vice cultivated as an art, but out of this hotbed of corruption grew the white flower of Gentile Christianity.

In this city began first the systematic preaching of the gospel to Greeks and the new faith was now taking root out in the Gentile world.

5. Philip's Missionary Labors

Philip was in the midst and height of his revival work in Samaria when by a strange interruption he was bidden to arise and go "unto Gaza: the same is desert." There however he fell in with an Ethiopian traveler, a high officer of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. He was reading a Greek translation of the prophet Isaiah and Philip was quick to see and seize his opportunity. With fine tact he introduced himself to the traveler and presently was with him up in his chariot explaining to him the Scriptures. The Ethiopian was receptive of truth and the explanation proceeded. With such a preacher and text and hearer, preaching resulted in conversion, and at a roadside stream baptism was administered to the new convert.

This is what comes of following the Lord whithersoever he commands us to go. We know not what great blessing we shall sow and reap for others and for ourselves when we go out to serve under divine guidance.

The gospel was now breaking over the narrow frontiers of Judaism and pushing out into the Gentile world. It has in it vital elements and forces of life that cannot be restricted but will spread around the world. All countries and continents are its field, and all races are to become its subjects.

The torch that Philip carried down into that desert has passed through many hands until it has come down to us and we are to carry it on.

6. Saul Converted and Commissioned

The story of Paul's conversion is related three times in the Acts, twice by himself, and it had burnt itself so vividly upon his brain that he never could forget it.

We are first given a view of Saul the persecutor at work.

He was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against Christians and was on his way to Damascus when conversion fell upon him attended with supernatural accompaniments.

Instantly the proud persecutor turned around, as the word conversion means, and became obedient to his Lord.

Yet conversion is a process and it went forward with Paul through several stages. Others had part in the work. He had to be led by the hand in his blindness and was taken into the city and placed in charge of Ananias who gave him further instruction.

Conversion is usually a complex process in which we may have a part in leading others to Christ.

The Holy Spirit now came upon Paul and he was baptized and then he straightway preached Jesus in the synagogue that he is the Son of God.

What splendid and powerful preaching began there that day! In a passage from Paul's First Letter to Timothy we see how the great apostle passed his own conversion on to others.

7. Sowing and Reaping

While a master of logic and usually conducting a theological argument with his readers, yet Paul also mingled his letters with practical advice, sometimes warning them severely and at other times admonishing them gently or comforting them tenderly.

Paul admonishes his Galatian readers to bear one another's burdens in a spirit of patience and charity, and then presently tells them to bear their own burdens, the two duties being not contradictory but complementary.

The law of sowing and reaping is then urged and applied. The law is universal in the biological world that like produces like, wheat bringing forth wheat, and thistles producing thistles, and there is no escaping or evading this law.

It equally operates in the human world where our thoughts and acts are seeds that infallibly bring forth their own kind in a multiplied harvest that accumulates in one's habits and becomes his fixed character and destiny.

We are all disposed to grow weary and discouraged in well-doing and Paul urges us to keep our courage up and go forward.

8. A Gospel for All Men

A critical day in the history of Christianity opens at this point. The new faith could not travel far without coming into conflict with the old faith.

Two parties arose in the early church over this point, the one holding that Gentiles could not be admitted to the church, and the other contending that the gospel is for all men.

The issue precipitated a council at Jerusalem at which the question was debated.

Peter had first been of the Jewish way of thinking that the gospel was not for Gentiles, but he told the story of his conversion to the broader view down at Joppa and Cæsarea, when his meeting with Cornelius showed him that God had granted repentance unto the Gentiles.

The effect of his narrative was decisive upon his prejudiced hearers and they all joined in the joy of the discovery that the Gentiles were also subjects of the grace of God and entitled to admission into the church.

That was a great day and decisive victory in the history of the church and kingdom of God in the world.

9. The Mission to Cyprus

A new chapter in this history now opens, not in Jerusalem but in Antioch. There was a small but strong Christian church there, and a call came to it to choose and send forth two of its members on a foreign missionary campaign. Barnabas and Saul, its two ablest men, were singled out for this purpose, and they set sail for the island of Cyprus and passed through it to its western end.

There the missionaries were invited to meet with Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul, but found him under the influence of a fortune teller who had him under his spell. When Paul saw the malign work of the soothsayer he pronounced judgment of blindness on him.

The Roman governor was then converted.

10. Turning to the Gentiles

The work in Cyprus was now done and Paul and Barnabas pushed on to new fields, crossing over into Asia Minor and passing on up to Antioch in the mountains. They began in the synagogue, preaching to the Jews that Jesus was their promised Messiah. Their success with the people stirred up the opposition of the Jews as the new preachers seemed to them to be destroying their ancestral religion of Moses.

The missionaries then turned to the Gentiles, for the gospel cannot stop its offer to others when any class will not receive it.

The Gentiles were glad at the good news and glorified the Lord.

The missionaries were soon driven from the town by the fury of the mob, and they shook off the dust of their feet against the Jews in that place.

Yet Paul was not ashamed of the gospel in the face of this opposition.

11. Some Missionary Experiences

The next town at which the missionaries stopped was Lystra where they had a notable experience as they were at first worshiped as gods and then were stoned and Paul was left for dead, so fickle is human popularity. Paul and Barnabas might have been tempted to accept the false adulation, but they were strong and brave enough to disown and spurn it. The temptation to seek popularity by fictitious means is an insidious danger to the ministry, and such reputation is generally short-lived.

Paul was down but he was not dead, and he got up and the missionaries passed on to Derbe, the furthest point they reached in this journey, and then they retraced their steps back to Antioch in Syria, confirming their converts on the way.

12. The Council in Jerusalem

The question of admitting the Gentiles into the church, which was apparently settled at the first council in Jerusalem, did not stay settled, but was opened again when certain Judaizers followed Paul's work in the Galatian churches and taught the Gentile converts that they must be circumcised or they could not be saved.

This was a further attempt to fasten the burdensome Mosaic yoke on the Gentiles, and this resulted in a second council at Jerusalem when the new form of the question was debated.

Paul was a principal speaker at this council, and his words had great weight as he had just come back from his missionary tour and told of his experience.

The decision of this council opened the door for the full and free entrance of the Gentiles into the church, and this victory sent the gospel out as a world religion.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is the value of this history of the early church to us?
2. Ought we to be wiser and better than these early Christians?
3. What have they done for us and how can we carry forward their work?

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH QUARTER

In the Third Quarter we saw Christianity facing its critical hour when it was called upon to stand on its own feet and start out on its world-march. Pentecost sealed its establishment and stability and then it soon stumbled into Gentile territory and had to settle the epochal question of its relation to Judaism. This dangerous problem was adjusted and Paul started out as the great apostle to the Gentiles and made his first missionary journey. In this Quarter we take up the story of his missionary travels, starting with him as he stood at Troas on the shore of the Ægean sea and heard the cry of a Macedonian man to come over and help them.

Here Christianity faced the issue of whether it was simply an Asiatic religion, or it would dare cross into Europe.

The decision was made and when Paul with Silas, and Timothy and also with Luke who joined them at that point, crossed that narrow sea he effected a more revolutionary crossing than was Cæsar's crossing the Rubicon.

We now follow Paul through several strategic cities in Macedonia where he began preaching in the synagogues but was usually driven out by bitter persecution. Still he had tact to gain a few converts in each place and leave a small church. He paused only for a day or so at Athens, yet there he preached a great sermon with some important results, and then we find him in Corinth, a center of wealth and wickedness. He now returned to Jerusalem, having cut a wide circuit and swath through Eastern Europe.

In a third missionary journey he first goes to Ephesus on the Ægean coast where he labors three years, and then passes on around Macedonia to Corinth and back to Jerusalem.

Here his course is arrested and he becomes a Roman prisoner and this carries him to Rome. This great magnet had been long drawing him, but now he arrives in bonds.

Yet even in bonds he preaches the gospel and writes letters and finally closes his work. With the last scratch of his pen in his Second Epistle to Timothy, his hand is done and soon lies still under the executioner's sword.

We are also given lessons consisting of passages from two other letters of Paul and one from John.

The Fourth Quarter carries on the stirring story of the Third Quarter and is full of exciting interest and at every point contains helpful lessons for us.

FOURTH QUARTER

(Second Half of a Six-months' Course)

LESSON I—OCTOBER 4

The Macedonian Call

Lesson: Acts 15:36–16:15; Romans 15:18–21.

Golden Text: Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Matthew 28:19.

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 11:8–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: How Christianity Came to Europe.

Topic for Young People and Adults: What Took Paul to Europe?

Lesson Text—Acts 16:6–15; Romans 15:18–21

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

7 And when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not;

8 And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a *Roman* colony: and we were in this city tarrying certain days.

13 And on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed,

19 In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ;

20 Yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation;

21 But, as it is written,

They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,
And they who have not heard shall understand.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *Providence at Work.*
2. *A Vision in the Night.*
3. *A Prayer Meeting by a River Side.*
4. *A Certain Woman.*
5. *Light from One of Paul's Letters.*

We pick up the thread of Paul's second missionary journey. When he started out on this journey from Antioch he revisited the churches he had established on his first journey in Asia Minor, and he was now ready to strike out into broader fields and seize new strategic centers.

1. Providence at Work

His first plan was to pass directly west into the province of Asia, in the western part of Asia Minor, doubtless aiming at the populous cities on the coast, but the Holy Spirit said no. Next he attempted to turn northward into Bithynia, but again the Spirit interposed a barrier and shut him off from that field. Only one other path remained open to him and he went northwestward to the coast at Troas and looked out over the Ægean sea.

Here we see Providence at work.

The Holy Spirit was the Guide, though doubtless intermediate means were used. These means are not indicated, but they may have been difficulties in the way of travel, such as floods or bands of robbers, or such circumstances as hedge our way and direct our goings.

The Lord doubtless uses many sign-boards for our guidance and the obedient soul becomes expert at reading their directions and is always led in a plain path.

Paul may have thought it was a strange way in which he was being thwarted in his plans. He was out on the Lord's work, yet when he attempted to enter a region right before him he was buffeted on that side and beaten off from that field. He was so hedged in on every side that he may have begun to doubt whether the Lord had any more work for him to do.

Yet one path always remained open before him and that led on to his

largest field and grandest opportunity and service and the world's widest blessing. Had he settled down in Asia Minor, his work would have been provincial and local, but beyond Troas lay Europe.

When God shuts us off from one work, he has some other service waiting for us, and his path, however narrow it may seem, may lead us out into a larger place than we ever planned or dreamed.

2. A Vision in the Night

At Troas a vision swept down upon Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood beseeching him with the cry, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Where Paul's journey seemed to have ended in night it suddenly blossomed out into a vision; and where our path runs into darkness we may find the clearest guidance and the widest enlargement. Visions are still hovering around us to catch our attention and coax and woo us into a larger world and a richer life.

Any idea or ideal luring and leading to larger and lovelier things and loftier attainments, any call to duty and opening to service is a vision burning in our sky.

This world swarms with such visions. It is not simply a great globe of rock and ball of mud in which we wallow, but it is carpeted with green grass, swathed in blue sky and overarched with stars. Man is the upward-looking animal, as the old Greek name means, and he sees infinitely more when he looks up than when he looks down; for when we look down we may see only dust and dirt, but when we look up we see the eternal stars and the splendid thoughts of God.

This Macedonian was a representative man and his call was the pathetic cry of the pagan world. The Holy Spirit is out there in the darkness and is moving many hearts to cry for help.

This man is still calling, only he has now moved on and stands on the shores of India and Africa.

The church that cannot hear this man is so deaf that it is spiritually dead.

The call to help others is one mark of a heavenly vision.

Earthly visions lure us to wealth and pleasure and worldly splendor and thus urge us to help ourselves; but a vision born of the Spirit of God

calls us to help others, not only those near by, but also those far off, even beyond the sea.

Trust such a vision: it is born of some better spirit than human ambition and selfishness and sweeps down upon us out of the sky.

Paul trusted and obeyed. " And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them." Notice the change from " they " to " we," for here Luke evidently joins the company and steps into the story as the traveling companion of Paul and writer of the narrative.

" I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision " (Acts 26:19) was Paul's testimony of a former vision, and such obedience with him had grown into an unconscious habit.

When Paul knew the Lord's way his conscience and will did not hesitate or delay or debate about it, but instantly acted and turned the vision into verity.

There was no gap between his conscience and his conduct, but the two coincided and flowed together in the same channel. This instinctive habit of obedience to divine impulses consolidated Paul's conscience and character and conduct into unbroken unity and gave him masterful power. Such a habit makes a man strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

The reason we do not see more visions is that we do not obey the ones we do see.

Every vision disobeyed dulls and blinds us to the next one.

So Paul and his three companions sailed from Troas across the Ægean sea to Neapolis and passed on to Philippi, an important Roman city of Macedonia.

This sail of a few hours marks one of the greatest crossings and epochs of history.

In passing from Troas to Philippi the gospel stepped at one stride from Asia into Europe and set out on its world-wide march. A new continent was here added to the kingdom of Christ; the star of spiritual

empire started westward and then kept moving on until now it has encircled the globe.

When we set out under divine providence following heavenly visions, we never know into what unexpected enlargements we may be led and what splendid results we may achieve.

3. A Prayer Meeting by a River Side

The gospel seed is now transplanted from Asia to Europe and immediately it takes root and begins to grow, for it is adapted to every continent and climate and soil. The narrative speaks of the missionaries as tarrying " certain days "—unimportant days that are simply huddled together under a general designation—and hurries on to a special day that shines out upon the page like a star, that never-to-be-forgotten " sabbath day " when, as Luke records, " we went forth without the gate by the river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer."

The pagan world did not know this day, but these humble missionaries knew it and they knew how to spend it; and they spent it, not in sightseeing or pleasure seeking or lazy lounging, but in attending a place of worship.

Many among us do not know what to do with this day; to them it may be a day of emptiness and weariness, or a day of business or pleasure, a day that dissipates strength rather than renews it, that frets life rather than frees it.

But to those that know its secret and use it aright, it is a divine day in the calendar that brings rest and worship and peace and breathes a better spirit through all our days.

These men on entering this city found a place of worship. What a man finds in a city quickly reveals what he is, for every man goes to his own place. The young man that goes to a city and finds a low resort is traveling a different road from one that finds a church or a prayer meeting.

The missionaries did not know just where the place of worship was, but they soon found it. They had a spiritual scent that led them to the right place.

If we really want to go to church we shall surely be able to find the place and to get there in time.

When the missionaries sat down they found themselves in a congregation of women, which is not unlike the experience of many a modern pastor.

Where were the men that they were not at that prayer meeting? And where are the men today that they are not at our prayer meetings?

Business is no excuse. Worship is business and the main business that helps all other businesses and ought to be attended to first.

Does anyone utter the sneer that the church is made up of women?

If this were true, and it is not, would it be any discredit to the church? Men support evil resorts: is this any honor to them? A public place that women never enter is no fit place for a man to be.

Women do attend church: this is an honor to them and to the church; and the man that thinks to insult the church with this sneer probably insults his own mother.

It is the glory of the church that it has woman's support; and her hand is everywhere holding up its banner and bearing it on to victory. "The Lord giveth the word: the women that publish the tidings are a great host" (Ps. 68:11).

4. A Certain Woman

The narrative now singles out "a certain woman" whose interesting story is told. Lydia has the conspicuous honor of being the first Christian convert in Europe, and thus "the man of Macedonia" turns out to be a woman.

The gospel in pagan lands generally first finds its way into woman's heart, and the cause that wins woman to its support will eventually conquer the world.

Lydia was "a seller of purple," a business woman and shopkeeper who was earning her own living, and this fact shines out as a crown on her brow. She was a producer and not a mere consumer and parasite in society, and was making the world richer by her presence.

It is better to sell purple for a living than to wear it in idle luxury. Woman is now crowding into business along many lines, and

she has a right to do whatever her nature fits her and her duties permit her to do.

Next, Lydia "worshiped God"; she was not only a worker but also a worshiper; she was a business woman, but she was not so busy that she could not go to prayer meeting. Her business did not crowd out her religion, and her religion did not unfit her for business, but the two worked together and helped each other.

This is the true relation of business and religion: not antagonistic but complementary; in fact, work and worship should fuse into one life.

A man's business should be his religion, and his religion should be his business. This spiritualizes business and practicalizes religion and turns all life into the glory of God.

Lydia was religious, but she was not yet a Christian; one thing was lacking and she found this in Christ.

The beautiful steps of her conversion are linked together like loops of gold.

First, she "heard" the gospel. We must first hear the truth, and if we stop our ears with worldliness we thereby shut out the kingdom. Next, "the Lord opened" her heart; the Spirit of God intervened and inserted a divine link in this chain. Then she gave "heed unto the things which were spoken," she fixed her attention upon them and believed and acted on them. Her faith now flowed out into fact and "she was baptized." She did not pick and choose among the commandments, but obeyed them all. Then "her household" was baptized, grace widened its borders and her family passed with her into the kingdom.

Finally, she invited the missionaries home to dinner, her new faith flowered out into the beautiful grace of hospitality, and her conversion became complete.

5. Light from One of Paul's Letters

Paul's Letters at many points throw light upon his missionary work, and in a later Letter written at Corinth to the church at Rome he lets us see into the state of mind in which he carried on his missionary labors.

He will not boast and will hardly dare speak of the things God had

wrought through him and all his works and wonders were wrought in the power of the Holy Spirit.

He was conscious that everywhere from Jerusalem even unto Illyricum along the Adriatic shore he had fully preached the gospel and had not built on another man's foundation.

He was not seeking an established church and an influential pulpit, but struck out into pagan lands and founded his own churches and made for himself a pulpit from which the gospel resounds to this day.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How can we discern the guidance of Providence in our circumstances?
2. Did you ever have any heavenly visions? How may we know them?
3. Why should we go to prayer meeting? Has the prayer meeting had its day?
4. How was Lydia converted? Do we have such conversions now?
5. What is woman's place in the church in our day?

LESSON II—OCTOBER 11

Paul in Philippi

Lesson: Acts 16:16–40; Philippians 4:4–9.

Golden Text: Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Philippians 4:4.

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:35–39.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Jailer Led Captive.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Initial Victories in Europe.

Lesson Text: Acts 16:22–34; Philippians 4:4–7

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the jailer, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.

32 And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.

34 And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.

5 Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *The Missionaries Mobbed and Jailed.*
2. *A Midnight Prayer Meeting.*
3. *An Earthquake.*
4. *A Great Question*
5. *And a Short Answer.*

The first European convert was a woman and the second was a man; the first was a storekeeper and the second was a jailer.

The gospel reaches up and down and through society in every direction and is no respecter of persons.

The first conversion occurred in a quiet prayer meeting on a river bank, and the second grew out of a mob and took place in a jail amidst the cracking walls and shocks and shouts of an earthquake. The gospel works under all conditions and tells its message in sanctuary or street and knows no difference between the iron-barred windows and stone walls of a prison and the richly-stained glass and softly-carpeted aisles and cushioned pews of a church or stately cathedral.

The gospel of Christ could not invade Europe without meeting opposition, and this battle is still on.

1. The Missionaries Mobbed and Jailed

The peace of the river side prayer meeting was soon succeeded by the fury of a mob. As Paul and his companions passed to and fro between their lodgings and "the place of prayer," they were followed by a fortune-telling slave girl, who was possessed of an evil spirit, and who kept crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation."

Paul took pity on her and commanded the spirit to come out of the unhappy creature, and, leaving her in her right mind, doubtless passed on with his heart full of holy joy.

But the slave girl belonged to owners that took a different view of the case from that of Paul. The revenue they derived from her fortune-telling made her a productive property, and this profit was now gone and their property had suddenly lost its value.

Her gain was their loss; she had regained her mind, but they had lost their money, and with them her soul weighed nothing against their greed.

These men had hitherto taken no interest in the missionaries and had let them pass to their praying and preaching unhindered. But now that these preachers had interfered with their business and cut off their profits it was high time to take them in hand, and this was done with a vengeance. The owners seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the magistrates and, without mentioning the good they had really done, brought against them an artful and efficacious charge.

They were "Jews," which was almost a crime in itself, and they "do exceedingly trouble our city," which was bad for business, and "set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans," which appealed to the orthodoxy of the people and stirred up prejudice against the preachers as dangerous heretics and also raised the great fear of Roman judgment. The simple statement of such a charge was enough.

It most cunningly combined racial prejudice and business and religion and politics in a way that obviously proved these preachers were a menace, and when these powerful interests and prejudices can shout with one voice against a man, the outlook for him is bad.

The people of Philippi took this view of the situation and instantly they become a mob; the magistrates, in violation of Roman law that had been quoted against the prisoners, had them stripped and beaten on the spot, and then they were hurried off to jail and were soon in the inner prison with their feet fast in the stocks.

The world will stand for preachers and the church as long as they go into a quiet place and preach and pray by themselves; such worship may go on indefinitely and "no one durst molest us or make us afraid." But when the gospel in the form of preachers and Christian citizens comes out of the church and begins to close saloons and demand social justice and stop law-breaking and rebuke sin in high places and cast out devils generally, the world will suddenly get after them, and Christian reformers will be attacked and persecuted and some of them may go to jail.

Worldly interests may take little notice of religion until it ventures on their ground and then they wake up and warn it off. The world is not afraid of Christianity at worship, but it stands ready to fight Christianity at work.

2. A Midnight Prayer Meeting

At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, " and the prisoners were listening to them."

This is the strangest prayer meeting on record.

The prison was dark and damp and infested with vermin, the apostles were forced into uncomfortable positions with their feet fast in the stocks, sleep was impossible—what could they do?

They could pray, making known their desires unto God and receiving calmness and hope from him.

No prison can stop prayer, or circumstances shut us off from God. However the outward man may be burdened and bound, the inward man is free to fly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and help in time of need.

Not only were the apostles praying, but they were also singing hymns unto God.

David's psalms, many of them born of trouble yet breathing triumphant faith and joy, were familiar to them and would express their praise. " Thou hast set me at large when I was in distress." " Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than they have when their grain and their new wine are increased."

" And the prisoners were listening to them." A fine instance of unconscious influence.

The praying apostles did not know that their prayers and hymns were stealing out through the corridors into the ears of other prisoners. No one knows how far his unconscious influence goes. It runs far beyond his intentional plans and purposes into an unseen region where it reaches many others and helps to shape their lives and yet he knows it not.

This immensely widens the responsibility and the power of our lives for both good and evil. In offering a prayer or doing the slightest good deed we may be saving a soul unknown to us; or by a careless act we may unwittingly lead others astray.

3. An Earthquake

The midnight prayer meeting was interrupted by an unexpected but, in that region, not an uncommon occurrence. An earthquake shook the rocky ribs of the earth, disrupted the foundations of the prison, cracked its walls, wrenched open its iron doors, and tore loose the prisoner's bolts and chains, setting them free.

The jailer awoke in the midst of the shocks and shouts and, seeing the cell doors standing open, was seized with an awful fear as he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. Instantly he whipped out his sword to thrust it through his heart, for he knew that he would have to answer for his prisoners with his life.

Quick as a flash Paul cried out, " Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." The word was spoken just in the nick of time, the sword dropped, and the jailer's life was saved.

" Do thyself no harm." This forbids suicide under all circumstances.

Life is God's gift and we have no right to take it away. He has stationed us at our post of duty, and, however we may be hemmed around and pierced through with distress and agony, we ought bravely to bear the burden all the days of our appointed time till our change come.

But there are other ways of taking our life than by the sword. Every sin is such a sword that severs some tender thread in the tissues of the soul. There are coarse sins of the flesh that cut and slash the very body to pieces, and others more subtle that injure more delicate elements in our complex personality.

All sin is suicide.

4. A Great Question

Then the jailer called for lights and sprang in and, trembling with fear, fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, " Sirs, what must I do to be saved? "

This is the greatest question of the world, the question that, being answered, will answer all other questions.

It is an old question, for the greatest things in the world are old things, yet it is ever new. Many of the questions of the day that fill the newspapers and are the sensation and talk of the hour, compared with this question are as the flash of a meteor compared with the eternal burning of a star.

Pitifully blind is the man that is busy and excited with the little questions of the world and passing events of the hour and has never stopped to ask what he must do to be saved.

This is no speculative or trivial question, but one that at the moment crowded out every other thought.

It is the cry of a lost man.

Why did the jailer tremble with fear? It was not the fear of the earthquake or for the escaped prisoners, for these dangers were past. At first he did fear the judgment of Cæsar, and then, this danger being past, he saw further than the bar of Rome and feared the judgment of God.

Conscience shook his soul and blanched his face. Every man is lost in sin, and no unbelief or indifference or worldliness will change this fact into a false alarm.

And this is a practical question, implying that something must be done about sin, and it is a sharply personal question, implying that each one must do something for himself.

What brought this jailer to this great conviction and cry? The earthquake.

Probably he went to sleep that night without offering a prayer; God was not in all his thoughts. But the rocking earth and falling walls woke up first the sleeping man and then the sleeping conscience in the man and brought him to a sense of his sin and danger.

God is in the earthquake that shakes our lives.

The meaning of some disaster that befalls us may be that we are sleeping in sin, and God is rocking all things around us to arouse us

and wake us into life. Many a man dates his new birth from an earthquake.

Blessed are loss and sorrow when they shake down all the earthly things around us that they may turn us to the things that cannot be shaken.

5. And a Short Answer

Paul, who could always say just the right thing at the right moment and never wasted a word, instantly answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."

Never was the gospel put more pointedly and compactly and thrillingly.

It was a shot that exactly hit the mark. It saved the man and it gave a short answer to this great question for all time.

It first told the Roman jailer that he could be saved.

It did not tell him that he was a pagan and outside the pale of divine mercy, or a wicked man and there was no hope for him, but instantly as though the Roman had been a Jew and the jailer a good man, it told him how to be saved. No examination was held to test his knowledge of Scripture or his orthodoxy, no creed was imposed upon him, but he was taken just as he was and the door of salvation was opened to him.

The jailer believed and immediately the promise was fulfilled. Faith rushed into fact.

The jailer was baptized and thereby entered upon full obedience. Grace then widened its borders and the whole household believed and were baptized.

The family, so to speak, were thrown in extra.

The jailer now dressed the missionaries' wounds, took them into his house and gave them a good meal. The conversion that started in the madness of the mob and was precipitated by an earthquake ended in gracious hospitality and exuberant joy.

Thus the quiet orderly conversion of Lydia was followed by the earthquake conversion of the jailer. All are not converted in the same way.

One may have a quiet comfortable conversion in which he is born the second time as unconsciously as the first time; another may have a sharp experience and be converted almost in a convulsion.

Let each one be satisfied with his own type of experience in conversion and not envy or disparage or despise that of another. The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

In the concluding verses of our lesson we are given a brief selection from the letter Paul afterwards wrote to this Philippian church in which he gives them some good Christian exhortation.

He knew how to follow up his converts and keep them in the faith.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Are there any ways in which Christian missionaries and ministers are mobbed today?
2. Is fear a proper motive in conversion?
3. Is an earthquake a part of the providence of God?
4. What is conversion?
5. What are some different types of conversion?

LESSON III—OCTOBER 18

Paul in Thessalonica and Berœa

Lesson: Acts 17:1–15; 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12.

Golden Text: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119:18.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:9–16.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Two Kinds of Hearers.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Winning through Love.

Lesson Text: Acts 17:1, 5–11; 1 Thessalonians 2:7–12

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

5 But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

8 And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berœa: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

7 But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children:

8 Even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe:

11 As ye know how we *dealt with* each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging *you*, and testifying,

12 To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. In Thessalonica.
2. Some Believed.
3. And Some Believed Not.
4. Artfully False Charges.
5. The Noble Berœans.

After their rough reception and treatment in Philippi we might now suppose that Paul and Silas would think they had had enough of Europe and would return to Asia, but they still kept their faces westward and the first day's journey carried them thirty miles farther into Europe and the second another thirty, and so on until they reached Thessalonica about a hundred miles from Philippi. This town under its modern name of Salonika still stands a considerable city at the head of its gulf, a city of 250,000 population, and it was an important point where a large army was encamped during the Great War.

These soldiers of the cross no more thought of turning back than did Cæsar's legions and instead of retreating penetrated deeper into the pagan country and seized a larger and more strategic city. They had got the gospel wedge inserted into Europe and now they continued to drive it in until it split it wide open.

These wounded weary Jews, creeping along the roads of the empire, were a mightier force than Cæsar on his throne.

1. In Thessalonica

All the way from Philippi to Thessalonica the travelers were alert for some new opening and they passed through town after town before they found a suitable opportunity; and then Paul, as his custom was, went into a synagogue and preached to the Jews for three days.

Paul's piety was systematic and his worship had grown into an unconscious habit.

It was not a matter of convenience or feeling or taste with him whether or not he would go to church, but he went "as his manner was." Some people go to church according to the weather or their wardrobe, but we ought to go according to the almanac and the clock.

Habit eliminates debate and hesitation from life and reduces it to regularity and certainty.

Paul not only went into the synagogue, but he also took part in the service and had something to say. He did not rant, but he reasoned, for the gospel is a rational system of truth and can never dispense with clearness and logical thought. Yet Paul's reasonings were not speculations spun out of his head, but were truths drawn from Scripture and confirmed in his experience.

The preacher or teacher is not simply uttering his own opinions and thereby adding to the religious confusion of the world, but he has a commission that marks out his message and he speaks by the Book.

Paul reasoned from the Scriptures, "opening and alleging that it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ."

Two fundamental doctrines were thus preached and pressed upon these Jews, the atonement and the resurrection of Christ.

Paul had a firm grasp on the necessity of the atonement. It was not an accident in the life of Jesus but an integral part of his work, and "it behooved Christ to suffer," so that it was vital to the whole plan and efficacy of the gospel.

Christ not only needed to suffer, but also to rise from the dead, and Paul always preached the risen Christ and declared that if this resurrection were a fiction or myth, then Christian preaching and faith were vain.

We ruin and wreck the gospel when we deny or smooth down and quietly eliminate either the atonement or the resurrection of Christ.

It was a great gospel that Paul preached, no rose-water but a blood-red religion, even the power of God unto salvation, and it is the same gospel that is committed unto us.

If we ever remove these two foundation stones the whole structure will fall into ruin.

2. Some Believed

What was the result of the sermon? " Some of them were persuaded " (verse 4). Jewish prejudice and pride, powerful influences with them, as such influences are with us, did not encase their minds against new truth; worldliness did not make them listless and indifferent: doubt did not keep them out of belief, and fear did not drive them into it; but they " were persuaded," they let their minds calmly consider and receive the truth and their wills obey it.

This is the highest power of the soul, and at this point of deciding our beliefs we determine our conduct and character and destiny.

Having believed they " consorted with Paul and Silas," they cast in their lots with them, as the word means. They came out into the open with their Christian faith and expressed it in public fact and fellowship. They were not ashamed of their company and took their chances with them in a hostile city.

They cast all they had into the Christian life and staked everything upon it.

This must have broken some precious ties, cost them some business losses, and subjected them to much ridicule and scorn, but they had the courage of their conversion and were bravely true to the missionaries and to Christ. Paul never forgot their faithfulness to him, and in writing to them soon afterward in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians he says, " Ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much suffering, with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1:6).

Mention is also made of " a great multitude " of believing Greeks and " of the chief women not a few." The gospel was now breaking down all distinction between Jew and Gentile and fusing all races into brotherhood. Woman was given an equal place in the kingdom with man and this is her right to this day.

Wonderful was the solvent power of the gospel in that ancient hard-crusted world, and it still has this power in our world.

3. And Some Believed Not

But some of the Jews were " moved with jealousy " and rejected the gospel. Paul's preaching divided the Jews in this city and while some believed others believed not.

This has ever been the result of preaching this truth.

The human will has sovereign power and may thrust its resistance against the holiest truth and grace of God.

We are given a glimpse into the motives and methods of these recalcitrant Jews. They were "moved with jealousy"; they saw the superior gifts of Paul and feared that popularity and power were about to slip out of their hands, and they would brook no opposition and rivalry; their unbelief was not open-minded and honest, but it was biased and insincere, ignoble and mean. There may be and is honest religious doubt, but much scepticism has a poisoned root: it openly or secretly feeds on selfishness or pride or worldliness or sensuality or some form of sin.

No unbelief can oppose the spirit of Christ, which is the essence of Christianity, and be sincere.

Some of the prejudice against the church is due to the fact that its members are mostly well-to-do, and one root of such unbelief is envy.

The method of these unbelieving Jews was as mean as their motive. They "took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble": men they would have scorned to recognize under other circumstances; but now they received them as bosom friends. Persecution, like politics, makes strange bed-fellows. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with after it has been given a bad name, and any disreputable fellow was good enough tool for these Jews to use against Jesus and his followers.

They gathered these vile fellows into a crowd and set the city in an uproar. Persecution and passion are closely akin and they respect no rights, but break down the last safeguards of liberty and life.

Such lawlessness is growing in our country and it is one of the alarming symptoms in our civic life.

4. Artfully False Charges

The mob did not succeed in finding Paul and Silas, but they seized Jason and certain brethren, converts and friends of the missionaries, and dragged them before the magistrates and presented charges against them.

The first charge was, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." In so far as this meant that the new faith un-

dermined social order and institutions, its plain intention and point, it was false, but in a deep sense it hit the truth and was one of the unconscious testimonies that sometimes slip out of the mouths of enemies.

The gospel does turn the world upside down, because it is now wrongside up and needs to be turned.

The material and the temporal are now on top, and the spiritual and the eternal are underneath. Passion and strife now exalt themselves, and purity and peace are trampled under foot; "truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne." The flesh rules the spirit, and the devil rules the flesh.

Christ came to change all this and put everything in its right place. When reason rules the mind and conscience controls the life and Christ sits on the throne, then will the world be rightside up.

Another of these charges was that "these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." This also was false in form but true in spirit. It was false that Christians were political traitors, even to Cæsar, but it was true that "there is another king, one Jesus."

The world needs "another king," for the kings of this world have made sorry work of their business.

"One Jesus" now shines increasingly as the spiritual master of the world, and more and more will his kingdom widen and deepen until the kingdoms of this world are his.

With such charges as these "they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city," for the gospel may at first bring not peace but a sword. But after the storm are bluer skies and greener grass and purer air, and after the sword of the gospel there are deeper peace and a better world.

And when the city magistrates saw the case was just another religious dispute among Jews "when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go."

Such is often the futility of persecution.

5. The Noble Berœans

Mob rule ends reason, and it was no use to stay longer in Thessalonica, and so the missionaries moved on, still going west. Sixty miles farther west was Berœa, where was a synagogue, and we might have thought that Paul would shun such a pest-house. Had he not had enough synagogues? Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica were not these enough? No, when they came to Berœa " Paul and Silas went into the synagogue of the Jews." The synagogue was their first background and point of approach and contact, and though it cost Paul many a stoning yet the sight of one always stirred the war spirit in him and he put on his armor for another fight of faith. His experience in Berœa, however, was a pleasant surprise. " These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

Deeper than our acts is that nature or disposition out of which all these streams of life flow, and happy is the man that has a noble nature.

This nobility of nature showed itself in the willingness of these Berœans to examine into and receive truth. Their minds were not blinded with bigotry or crystallized in conservatism, but they were transparent to truth from whatever quarter it shined; they were plastic to any mold of truth that they found.

Yet they were not fickle and blown about by every wind of new doctrine and they took no man's word for truth, but investigated for themselves whether these things were so.

Second-hand opinions did not count with them, but only first-hand truth.

The battle with them was not between the old and the new, but between the false and the true, or between imperfect and partial views and fuller and more complete views.

This was really an early exhibition of the scientific spirit of unbiased truth-seeking that is the dominant method and demand of our day.

Science has exemplified this spirit and it is ruling in the field of religious inquiry.

We are not surprised, then, to read that " many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few."

There was logic in their faith, and such faith is strong and fruitful in life.

Our lesson adds a passage from Paul's Letter to these Thessalonians, in which he reminds them of his nursing care of them and urges them to be faithful in the Christian life.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give an account of the geography of Macedonia.
2. Give other instances in which the Bible sets down damaging admissions in its narrative.
3. To what degree are we responsible for our beliefs?
4. To what extent ought we to depend on scholars for our views of the Bible and its teachings?
5. What is the scientific spirit and how may we use it in our study of Christian teaching?

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 25

Paul in Corinth

Lesson: Acts 18:1–17; 1 Corinthians 13.

Golden Text: Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1–8, 13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Working for Christ in a Great City.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christianity in a Cosmopolitan City.

Lesson Text: Acts 18:1–11

1 After these things he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.

2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them;

3 And because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought; for by their trade they were tent-makers.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace:

10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he dwelt *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Paul the Tent-Maker.***
2. ***Reasoning in the Synagogue.***
3. ***The Usual Opposition.***
4. ***The Converts in Corinth.***
5. ***Paul Despondent.***

The hostile Jews of Thessalonica followed Paul to Berœa where they stirred up trouble against him so that Paul, leaving Silas and Timothy at that place, passed on.

He stopped next at Athens and there preached a notable sermon on Mars Hill and then went fifty miles westward to Corinth, the second famous city of Greece. Though it never rivalled Athens in intellectual culture, it equaled it in art and surpassed it in commerce and wealth. It was a city of magnificent architecture and its Acrocorinthus was crowned with a splendid temple of Venus that matched the Parthenon, which was visible in the distance on its Acropolis.

The city had a bad eminence in vice.

Its heterogeneous population, containing adventurers from every country and dregs drained from all the slums of other cities, and its wealth and luxury made it a hotbed of corruption in which every kind of profligacy grew riotously and shameless orgies attended its pagan worship.

Corinth shows us the failure of mere material development.

A magnificent material civilization may be the outgrowth of intellectual and artistic life, but it may also be the richly-embroidered robe of death, as light may be the steady splendor that shoots from the blazing surface of the sun, or the phosphorescent gleams that play among the ashes of decay.

Into this pleasure-seeking, sin-saturated city came Paul the missionary, bringing the gospel of purity and peace, and here he abode and labored for a year and a half.

1. Paul the Tent-Maker

Being an utter stranger in the city, Paul sought out some of his countrymen and found lodging with a family consisting of the husband and wife, Aquila and Priscilla, who had lately been expelled from Rome by an edict of the Emperor Claudius. As this edict was issued early in 52 A. D., we have in this event a fact which gives us a definite date in this history.

This husband and wife not only became Christians, but also became associated with Paul and went with him when he left Corinth. They

were tent-makers, and as Paul had learned this trade in Tarsus, he worked with them and thus earned his own living.

Every Jew was required by rabbinical law to teach his son a trade, and hence Paul's skill in this craft. This was not the only place where he thus supported himself and everywhere he paid his own way. Many a time Paul worked far into the night that he might preach by day.

These men had no mercenary motive in their work, and this imparts disinterested trustworthiness to their testimony to the gospel.

Knowledge of a trade is still a useful thing to a minister.

It is a valuable kind of education and it practicalizes the preacher as nothing else can do. It puts him in touch with men and enables him to understand and handle the practical matters of life. And it is still a good thing to fall back upon so that, if the preacher finds himself without support from a pulpit, he can grasp a plough or a plane.

Paul did not find tent-making and gospel-preaching inconsistent, and work and worship, business and religion, still go together and are deeply akin and help each other. Every man and woman should know how to do something useful and do it. Labor is an honor and a safeguard to a man, and idleness, when spent in laziness or luxury, may be a shame and a temptation.

The youth that learns some handcraft acquires a practical education and capital that he can never lose and that will yield him dividends through life.

2. Reasoning in the Synagogue

Tent-making, however, was only an avocation with Paul, and preaching the gospel was his vocation. "He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks." Literary criticism would readily discern that this sentence refers to Paul: it bears the mark of his style. He was always a reasoner and never a ranter, laying hold of the solid facts and principles of the gospel and building them into a logical system.

He began in the synagogue and used it as a foundation on which to rear the gospel; and he persuaded Jews and Greeks, making no distinction and gathering all men into the kingdom of God. So the skilful tent-maker was also a successful preacher, and this is a combination

that every one in some degree should realize. It is not necessary to enter a pulpit in order to preach; often effective preaching is done out of the pulpit by those that are never thought of as preachers. The business man and the busy woman who are also living gospels are all the while preaching and persuading in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Work and worship thus fuse into one life that reflects the glory of God.

Paul was presently rejoined by Silas and Timothy in Corinth, and then, being relieved of anxiety as to his Thessalonian converts, he was stimulated to greater activity in preaching and testified more earnestly that Jesus was the Christ. The presence of these men was an inspiration to Paul; they were "helps" (1 Cor. 12:28).

Some church officers and members are a damper and discouragement to the pastor: when he sees them coming his heart faints. Others are an encouragement and inspiration and their presence stimulates the pastor and sets everything moving with increased activity.

3. The Usual Opposition

The usual opposition soon developed in the synagogue. Some of the Jews were so rabid and furious against Paul that they blasphemed. Their intense bigotry and pride would not stand for the gospel of the crucified Nazarene and they burst into blasphemy. These Jews had the first chance at the grace of God, as the Jew has ever had, but here they sinned it away.

Paul saw that his work in the synagogue was done and that it would result in no good but only harm for him to visit it again. Shaking out his raiment after the Oriental manner, he said, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

The Jews brought a great deal of blood upon themselves through their bigotry and blundering and have made their race the pity of history.

But the Jews are not the only people that bring their own blood upon themselves: every wrongdoer does this very thing.

Sin is every one's own act and always works towards his self-destruction.

A man might as well let out some of his own blood as think a wrong thought or do an unrighteous deed.

" His blood be on us, and on our children," said the Jews in sending Christ to his cross, and this is what all those are saying that are rejecting him. Paul was clean of their blood, and we would do well to examine our skirts and see if they are spotless from any brother's blood. Turning from the Jews, Paul went to the Gentiles.

The gospel must go somewhere, and if we do not receive it, it will find others, and those whom we despise may go into the kingdom of God before us.

4. The Converts in Corinth

Out of the synagogue Paul went into the house of Justus, where he continued to preach. Blaspheming did not stop the gospel and never will; when it is shut out from one place it will always go to another.

Presently Paul began to gather many converts. One was Crispus, the ruler of the very synagogue out of which Paul was forced to go, who believed with all his house. The head man was pulled out of the synagogue into the church and this must have made a profound impression.

The work grew and many Corinthians believed and were baptized. A church was thus founded in Corinth which became important and figures largely in early church history.

Who were these people that formed this church?

Paul wrote two letters to this church, one from Ephesus and one from Macedonia, and these throw light into the interior of it. He writes unto them (1 Cor. 6:9–11): " Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you."

This slimy catalogue shows what some of these converts had been and had come out of. Some of them were in danger of falling back into this mire and Paul was ever anxious and watchful in keeping them out of it.

This was the kind of work the gospel did in these pagan hotbeds and cesspools of vice, and this is the kind of work it is still doing in great heathen lands and Christian cities.

It is taking some of the dirtiest rags and rottenest remnants of humanity and cleansing them into purity and sweetness. No soul steeped and saturated in sin is too vile for the grace of God to wash it whiter than snow. Christ has digged us all out of the pit and brought us out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock and established our goings; and we should ever be thankful to him and praise his glorious name.

And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

5. Paul Despondent

At this point Paul appears to have fallen into fear and deep despondency. The dreadful wickedness of the city may have depressed him and he doubtless saw on the edge of the horizon the coming storm.

It was in such extremities that Paul had received special divine manifestations and again the Lord appeared to him in a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace."

Paul was brave as a lion to the core, but the bravest man has hours of faintness and needs encouragement and inspiration.

Let us not be surprised when such hours overtake us, but endure the discouragement and listen for the divine voice that will cheer and strengthen us.

There is some vision and some promise in the Word of God that will exactly match our situation.

Such a promise was vouchsafed unto Paul: "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." God knew how many people he had in that wicked city, even as he did in the case of Nineveh. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This assurance should ever be a rock under our feet. Even when thunders roll and storms break the eternal God is our refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble.

If Paul feared harm at this time, his fear was groundless. Whatever man was plotting against him, God was round about him, and whoever would touch Paul would have to strike through God's omnipotence. If Paul feared failure in that great wicked city, again he was mistaken, for God had already taken a census of his people there and found them a multitude. God sees things before they are done and counts his own

souls before they are converted. We need more of the imperial power of imagination and faith that overleaps all obstacles, anticipates the future, sees the angel in the rough block of marble, the man in the boy, and the saint in the sinner.

It is this imagination that enables the farmer to plow and plant in the fall and then see the snows of winter cover his seeds, knowing that the balmy breath of spring will bring them to life and make them blossom and bear fruit.

This faith should keep us at work in the most discouraging circumstances and out of the most unpromising materials bring marvelous results.

It is a comforting thought that in the great city seething in sin, in the wide world weltering in wickedness, the Father has many children that we know not of, and he will at last bring them home.

Paul continued in Corinth a year and six months, teaching the word of God among its people. He there taught a vastly larger audience, for during this time he wrote the two Epistles to the Thessalonians that to this day are read and studied around the world and are sowing seed on every shore.

Paul never dreamed as he wrote these letters in Corinth to the Thessalonians that they would be caught up into the New Testament as inspired Scripture, but neither do we know when we write a letter or do any common deed how far its light will shine in the world.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why are cities great strategic centers for spreading any movement and message?
2. What is it to reason?
3. Why does the gospel so often excite opposition?
4. Can we get visions, or must we wait for them to come to us?
5. What is the greatest vision in our world?

LESSON V—NOVEMBER 1

World's Temperance Sunday

Lesson: Galatians 5:13–26; Romans 13:1–14.

Golden Text: Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.

Devotional Reading: Romans 14:13–21.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Reasons for Total Abstinence.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Progress of Temperance Reform.

Lesson Text: Galatians 5:13–26

13 For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only *use* not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.

14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these:* fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,

21 Envying, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 Meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.

24 And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.

25 If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.

26 Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. No Liberty from Moral Law.

2. Relations of Mutual Love.

3. Spirit Should Master Flesh.

4. Works of the Flesh.

5. Fruits of the Spirit.

6. How the Victory Is Won.

Galatians was probably the first Epistle written by Paul and is a masterly defence of Christian liberty. "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage," is Paul's clarion cry.

While the primary reference is to the entangling yoke of bondage to the ceremonial law of Moses, yet the same principle applies to every fetter, and so the Epistle may be interpreted as a temperance tract.

1. No Liberty from Moral Law

Liberty, however, has its dangers, and these Gentile converts, realizing and rejoicing in their freedom from Moses, might feel that they were also released from all law, moral as well as ceremonial, and this would be a deeper fall and degradation than any bondage under Moses.

This danger did attend this doctrine of liberty in these early churches, and the new freedom was prostituted to the worst forms of immorality.

The "Nicolaitans," mentioned in Revelation 2:6, 15, were "Antinomians" whose motto seems to have been, "Only believe and then you can do what you like." This would permit and justify the grossest vice, and the Nicolaitans appear to have gone to this length and depth.

This danger has ever attended any claim to perfection, and it may be only a step or slip from boastful sanctification into unrestrained sensuality.

This point was carefully guarded in the decree adopted at the second council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), which, while it set the Gentile converts free from the ceremonial law, yet also warned them against relaxing the moral law of Moses.

This principle runs all through this lesson. "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh." Probably some of them were doing this very thing and needed this express warning.

Any freedom newly gained and experienced is in danger of carrying its subjects to extremes in which it may be grossly abused.

But freedom from oppressive ceremonies does not in the least loosen the bonds of moral character and conduct.

Moral laws are not restrictions upon us but are the very means of our liberty.

The steel track does not limit the locomotive but gives it all the liberty it has; when it leaves the track it jumps into the ditch and its liberty is gone.

Moral laws are the track on which we can drive ourselves with speed and safety, but when we leave this track we shall land in the ditch of degradation and then our liberty is lost in the deepest and bitterest bondage.

2. Relations of Mutual Love

Christians should maintain relations of mutual love. They are through love to " be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Mutual love is the foundation stone of society, a tie that binds us all together in common life.

The interdependence of trade illustrates this truth. We have got beyond the condition in which each man or family provided things for himself or itself. Formerly families were self-dependent and complete in themselves, but now each family is a cell in a vast social organism that draws its supplies from near and far, even from the ends of the earth. Men are today tied together with thousands of filaments that knit them into solidarity in which they have many interests in common. Cut these mutual ties and men would fall apart and quickly be reduced to want and would even perish.

It is therefore a primary duty to strengthen these bonds and be faithful to them. Love is thus the most vital law of our social life.

This is the common atmosphere which we must breathe or be suffocated in our selfishness. But if we fall out and " bite and devour one another," our human world will be turned into a jungle of wild beasts. Not only will our friendship, the finest thing in our life, be torn to pieces, but all social relations will be strained and ruptured, business will be ruined, and the whole web of our society be ripped and raveled to shreds. Some people are so given to snapping and snarling at others that one can almost see the wild beast in them.

Let us get rid of this evil nature and love one another in spirit and in deed.

3. Spirit Should Master Flesh

With the Christian the spirit should master the flesh. Spirit and flesh stand for the higher and the lower natures in man.

The spirit is the part of our complex nature that is likest to the Spirit of God and is most open to his influence.

The flesh is our lower nature of instinct and appetite and passion.

It is not necessarily evil in itself, for it was created by God as a constituent part of our dual nature. But it easily runs into wrong by reason of its disposition to usurp the place of the spirit and become the dominant element in our lives.

In the unconverted or partially Christianized man the flesh is rebellious and imperious and wants to have everything its own way. In this state "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would." The flesh is the part of our nature in which sin is most deeply lodged and in which it asserts itself most imperiously and defiantly.

Thus the soul is the seat of an internal war that throws it into discord and strife.

Every one knows this inner war in his own experience, and the better one is the more intense does it become and the more deeply it is felt. It was this that forced from Paul the almost despairing cry, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

The birth into the Christian life consists in reversing the relations of flesh and spirit so as to put the spirit on the throne and the flesh in subjection.

The Christian is one who walks in the spirit and does not fulfil the lust of the flesh. The spirit is the dominant factor in his desires and deeds and ideals, and all his passions and appetites are held in subordination and disciplined into servants.

The lust of the flesh is not destroyed, appetite and passion are not

killed, but they are ruled and trained so that they flow in the channel of the spirit and contribute to its power.

The struggle of the Christian is to reach this ideal. The flesh still wars against his spirit, but he ever reënforces the spirit and seeks to keep it on the throne and to win the final victory in which its supremacy will give lasting harmony and peace.

4. Works of the Flesh

A catalogue is given of the works of the flesh and they are a bad lot, a mass of evil, slimy and malignant, that we should fear to touch.

They may be divided into two general classes, sensual indulgences and evil feelings.

Drunkenness is one of the worst in the black list, worst in itself, and worst because it breeds all the others.

Drunkenness is preëminently a sin of the flesh as it sinks the spirit in the flesh and lets all passions of the flesh loose. It turns a man, however strong and rich he may be in his intellect and however noble and kindly he may be in his disposition, into an insensate and furious beast. The whole man, spirit and body, becomes a mass of flesh inflamed, stupid, and degraded.

Drunkenness is also the unclean mother of all other works of the flesh.

There is not a vice it does not intensify, not a passion it does not inflame. It is impossible that a man should be a drunkard and not fall into the general ditch of degradation.

A story is current in the Orient that a wise old sheik gave to a young Arab prince, from whom he was about to part, a list of crimes and bade him choose the one which seemed to him least harmful. The young prince turned in horror from murder and theft and loss of virtue, and told the patriarch he would choose intemperance. "You have chosen that one," said the wise old man, "which will bring you all." The answer is as true in the Occident as in the Orient and will apply the world around.

Intemperance unlooses self-control and this lets all the demons of the flesh out of the cage of human nature.

The only way to kill this crocodile is to crush it while it is in the egg. Once it gets out of its shell it grows lusty and may soon defy all ordinary restraints.

The works of the flesh are indeed manifest and exhibit their dreadful nature, not only in the Bible, but as fearfully and solemnly in the daily newspaper.

We may see their hideous features and consequences in startling headlines every morning.

There is only one cure for this mother of all evil, and that is to overcome it with the spirit.

5. Fruits of the Spirit

In wide contrast with the works of the flesh stand the fruits of the spirit. They are all things that are pure and good and blessed and beautiful. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law."

Of course not, for they are themselves the very laws of our moral and spiritual life in keeping of which there is ever life more abundant, fuller and richer.

They are self-evident in their truth and worth and obligation and are their own witness in every conscience. No one needs to argue about them or prove them, for they prove themselves as they shine by their own light.

Of supreme importance among these fruits is "self-control," or the central control of the body and mind that keeps them in their proper place.

This self-control is the crown we wear in our self-sovereignty, and when this falls from our brow all our life may go down in dust and dirt.

The fruit of the spirit is not a wild growth, but the product of cultivation.

We must sow the right seed and carefully cultivate it and then it will ripen into the blossoms and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

This is the wider and deeper law that must underlie and give power to any legal enactments we may pass to create and sustain temperance

among people. Such laws are proper and even necessary in their place, but they will have little efficacy if they do not grow out of and are backed up by a general public opinion that is the expression of the spirit and character of the people.

We must seek to establish both the inner spirit and the outer law and the two together will maintain true temperance.

6. How the Victory Is Won

How shall we win this victory over the flesh and make it permanent? It is no easy conquest but a desperate struggle as all the world and the ages bear witness. It was this problem that brought Jesus Christ into the world, and at this point he is "mighty to save." "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."

> **"They that are of Christ Jesus": they that are born of him and belong to him as the child belongs to its parents, the scholar to the teacher, the soldier to the general, in unquestioning obedience.**

They have crucified the flesh with its lusts and passions by merging them in the life of the spirit.

> **The main secret of this victory is to get into union and fellowship with Christ so that he will be in us and we in him.**

"If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." This means that we cannot win this battle once for all, but that we must keep it up as we do our walking day by day. We must live in the Spirit as the ruling disposition of our life where all things are determined and whence all things in our life proceed, as the life of the tree proceeds from the nature of its root and sap.

We may become so absorbed and mastered by a great passion, as devotion to patriotism or ambition or art, that it unconsciously and easily controls us in all that we think and do.

> **So may we become so possessed by the Spirit that we shall live and yet not we, but Christ will live in us. This is the victory that overcometh the world, the flesh and the devil.**

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. For boastful self-perfection read Browning's powerful poem "Johannes Agricola in Meditation."
2. How can we cultivate and exercise the spirit of mutual love?
3. How can we introduce the spirit of mutual love into our industrial and social problems?
4. Does the Bible hide the sins of its saints?
5. Are there some sins to which saints are peculiarly subject?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 8

Paul in Ephesus

Lesson: Acts 19; Ephesians 5:5–11.

Golden Text: Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them. Ephesians 5:11.

Devotional Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:3–11.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Bonfire of Bad Books.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Gospel Facing Error.

Lesson Text: Acts 19:8–20

8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

10 And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 Insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out.

13 But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them that had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds.

19 And not a few of them that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Paul in the Synagogue.

2. Strolling Exorcists.

3. Sons of Sceva.

4. Failure and Fear.
5. Evil Deeds Confessed.
6. Bad Books Burnt.

Ephesus was the principal city of Asia Minor, located on the coast of the Ægean Sea, and was a center of commerce, wealth and art. Its crowning glory was the famous Temple of Diana that was counted one of the wonders of the ancient world. It rose a mass of pure white marble, magnificently columned and carved, and its brilliant beauty glittered far out at sea. Hewn out of the side of the overhanging mountain was a great amphitheater capable of seating fifty thousand persons, the stone seats of which yet remain.

Under the shadow of this magnificent Temple of pagan worship Paul, at this time on his third missionary journey, began his preaching, first in the synagogue and then in the lecture room of Tyrannus. The presence of the Jew was at first unknown to the Greek priests and they would have scorned to notice him.

But his preaching soon began to diminish the throngs of worshipers in the Temple and in time the gospel of the Nazarene inserted a wedge under its foundations that caused it to crumble and the worship of " the great goddess Diana " disappeared from the world.

1. Paul in the Synagogue

Paul preached boldly in the synagogue for three months, a much longer time than he was usually permitted to remain, " reasoning and persuading concerning the kingdom of God." The statement bears the marks of Paul's preaching, for he was essentially a reasoner and never a ranter, appealing to facts and principles and working them out in their logical connection and results.

Religion should never be permitted to slip from the base of truth and logic off into mere authority and emotionalism or fanaticism, for its value consists in its facts, and they should be so presented as to persuade the thinking mind and move the will.

The gospel became known at this time as " the Way," and this characterized it and marked it off from pagan faiths.

It was a way of believing and living, a practical word indicating that Christian faith is a practical thing.

Yet plain and good as the Way was, some were hardened against it and spoke evil of it, and such has ever been the reception of the gospel.

God will not override our reason and force us into his kingdom, but permits and requires us to exercise our own responsibility and choice. The invitation ever is, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

2. Strolling Exorcists

Some strolling Jewish exorcists tried their hand at imitating Paul, who had wrought notable works of healing in Ephesus. Such Jews wandered from city to city, plying their craft of professing to cast out evil spirits and thus trading on popular credulity. The Jews were much given to such arts, and there are many laws and warnings in the Old Testament against witches, sorcerers, and enchantments.

These exorcists "took upon them to name over them that had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus whom Paul preacheth."

They saw the power there was in the name of Jesus, and they scented money in it.

And thus a spurious form of Christianity sprung up under the preaching of Paul. Every successful man and movement has imitators, and religion is no exception to this law. Great preachers have their weak or grotesque mimics in many pulpits, and few fields are more alluring and lucrative to impostors and mountebanks than that of religion.

Spurious forms of Christianity have sprung up in every age.

The early Christian centuries were rife with such heresies, and every century has brought forth a plentiful crop. In our own day and country we have had and still have Joseph Smith with his Mormonism, Mrs. Eddy with her irrational but profitable system of Christian Science, and John Alexander Dowie with his money-making Zionism. These are really exorcists who have noted the power of the name of Christ and turned it to their own use and profit. They have all made large money out of the business and this is the milk in their coconut.

But it is no discredit to a good thing that it is imitated, but rather a tribute to its excellence. Counterfeit money does not disprove the worth of the genuine but confirms it. If there were no genuine money there would be no counterfeits.

If there were no true Christianity there would be no false Christian prophets.

3. Sons of Sceva

The case of two of these exorcists is given in detail. A certain Jewish chief priest in Ephesus by the name of Sceva had seven sons who were religious degenerates and had taken to the business of exorcising evil spirits with the name of Christ. Two of them tried their art on a man with an evil spirit. The man, speaking under the influence of the evil spirit, said, " Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? " Whereupon the man, frenzied with his evil possession, leaped upon the impostors and beat them so that they fled from the house with torn clothing and bloody wounds.

So their imposture did not work but suffered exposure and brought upon them the fury of their intended victim.

" By their fruits ye shall know them." Religious impostures and mountebanks may pronounce the name of Jesus Christ, but the evil spirit of sin does not know them and will not come out at their bidding. They may fatten on their deluded victims, but the victims are not really and permanently healed and the world is not made better by their presence. Sooner or later they are found out, and then they are disowned and drop into obscurity or obloquy.

But, it may be asked, do not some of these prophets succeed on a large scale? Have not Mormonism and Christian Science and Zionism flourished and had a rapid growth and a profitable career? And are all their healings a delusion? No, we need not say this, as " faith healing " in all its forms can work cures and even wonders with some kinds of ailments, and the mind has a strong influence over the body in all diseases. But such " cures " cannot cure organic diseases, and these spurious forms of Christianity will have their day.

Even half a century is a short period in the life of a religion, and these excrescences will go their way like many similar ones in the past.

4. Failure and Fear

The result of this failure was that fear fell upon many and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. It was seen that religious imposture

was a way of transgression that had its retribution, and that false prophets were to be shunned. We may well fear false prophets of every kind.

Religion has to do with the highest and holiest interests of life, and here more than anywhere else we need true guidance.

A true prophet will lead us into the light, but a false prophet will turn our very light into darkness and then how great is that darkness. Some of the religious impostures and quackeries of the day dress themselves up in such attractive garb and use such blandishments and make such alluring promises that many are deceived and deluded into following them in their devious and dark ways.

We should learn to try the spirits whether they be of God, and instantly and decisively detect and reject any false spirit of error and drive it from us.

The failure of these lying Jews, stealing the livery of heaven with which to serve the devil, falsely and blasphemously pronouncing the name of the Lord Jesus, only threw into bolder and brighter relief the real power of that holy and mighty name when pronounced by a genuine apostle. This imposture, instead of discrediting the name of the Lord Jesus, only caused it to be magnified. Every time a piece of counterfeit money is detected and destroyed, the value of every genuine coin is confirmed and enhanced.

Christianity must have some genuine value and lasting vitality, or it never would have lived down all the spurious imitations and degradations of it that have sprung up around it during its whole history. These forgeries may for a time cast suspicion upon the name of Christianity, but in the end their failure and exposure cause it to be magnified.

5. Evil Deeds Confessed

The fear that fell upon many of the Ephesians did not evaporate in mere emotion, but became a motive that moved the will and expressed itself in deeds. "Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds." The "strolling exorcists" were not the only ones that believed in magical arts and incantations: some of the

Christian believers were infected with the same credulity. Their imperfect faith was mixed with more or less superstition.

Our Christian faith is not perfect, but contains elements of error, and needs to be continually corrected and purified.

These Ephesian believers took the right path: they came to the church confessing their error and declaring their deeds. This was an act of sincere repentance and positive decision. They had been following some of the religious impostors and quacks of the day that used cunning arts and caught many foolish people, and such deceivers are plentiful enough with us and entrap many unwary and misguided souls. It took some courage for these converts to come out from such company and make a clean breast of these evil and often unclean things. Secret repentance was not enough for them: only public confession and renunciation could clear and cleanse their consciences.

Honest confession is ever good for the soul.

It brings the soul into definite and sharp conviction of its sin; it deepens and fixes this conviction by expressing it in public speech and pledge; and publicity helps to put it beyond recall. Such confession may be made to the pastor and other officers of the church, or before the church and the world, and it should always be made unto God.

It brings the soul into right relations with God so that he can exercise on it his pardoning and cleansing grace.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

6. Bad Books Burnt

These penitent believers and sorcerers did not stop even with confession. They brought their curious arts or devices and their magical books, piled them up in a heap and burned them in the sight of all.

Magical books have a great fascination for the Jews, and at this day great quantities of them are sold among the illiterate and superstitious Jews in New York and other cities.

Ephesus was famous for magical writings, often mere scraps of parchment inscribed with mysterious words and sentences, which were supposed to have miraculous virtue.

The value of such books burnt on this occasion amounted to fifty thousand pieces of silver, which might be equal today to something like fifty thousand dollars. We need not be surprised at the large sum, for such books are always sold at a high price and a great profit. The books of magic sold to the Jews in New York are mere cheap pamphlets, but they sell for a dollar apiece.

The burning of these books was decisive proof of repentance.

These Ephesians burnt their bridges behind them and left no way by which they might secretly return to their magical arts.

There are still many books and more than ever in the world that ought to be burned.

Our public censors and postal authorities are constantly trying to condemn and remove from the theaters and book stores and mails impure pictures and plays and books. If all the improper books and magazines and papers and plays exposed in public places or hidden secretly, together with all gambling tools and evil implements in the world or in any great city, were piled up in one great heap and set on fire they would make a tremendous conflagration, but it would cleanse the world of much temptation and wickedness.

There are some things that are not fit to be seen anywhere and should only be destroyed, and if we have any of them in our possession we should consign them to the flames.

With believers and converts bringing forth such fruits meet for repentance, we are not surprised that in Ephesus the word of God grew mightily and prevailed.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. To what extent has the Christian "Way" been tried out in the world?
2. Should we make public confession of all our evil ways?
3. What are some prevailing spurious forms of Christianity?
4. What are the best ways of dealing with them?
5. What can be done about the increasing flood of impure literature?
6. To what extent does the theater come under the same condemnation?

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 15

Paul in Jerusalem

Lesson: Acts 21:17–23:30.

Golden Text: Thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. Acts 22:15.

Devotional Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:7–15.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Paul Faces His Enemies.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Bearing Testimony in the Holy City.

Lesson Text: Acts 21:27–39

27 And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place.

29 For they had before seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: and straightway the doors were shut.

31 And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

32 And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them: and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and inquired who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some shouted one thing, some another, among the crowd: and when he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd;

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was about to be brought into the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May I say something unto thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek?

38 Art thou not then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins?

39 But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. An Oriental Uproar.

2. Roman Soldiers Rescue Paul.

3. The Demand of the Mob.
4. Paul and the Roman Captain.
5. Paul's Speech on the Stairway.

From Ephesus Paul passed around through Macedonia to Corinth and then returned to Jerusalem, concluding his third missionary journey. He was kindly received by the church and a narrative of his labors among the Gentiles again drew from the brethren thanksgiving and praise unto God.

The church at Jerusalem seemed to be united and harmonious, and yet the old antagonism between conservatives and liberals was working beneath the surface.

Some of the elders explained to Paul that many of the Jewish Christians were zealous for the Mosaic law and were suspicious of his orthodoxy, having heard that he had rejected Moses altogether; and they proposed that he go into the temple with four brethren that had taken a vow and, by thus appearing with them and bearing their expenses, disarm these criticisms.

Paul, in accordance with his practice of being all things to all men when no principle was imperiled, complied with this request.

While doing this he was spied by some Asiatic Jews, probably some of those that had opposed him in Ephesus, who immediately seized him and began to shout, "Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and hath defiled this place; and moreover he hath brought Greeks into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place."

1. An Oriental Uproar

Instantly there was a tremendous Oriental uproar. A maddened mob rose against Paul, he was dragged out of the temple down into the Court of the Gentiles, and the Court of the Women was shut to prevent any further defilement of the temple. The infuriated mob fell upon Paul and were bent on killing him. These Jews were stirred into furious fanaticism by a charge brought against Paul that was largely baseless.

He did not reject Moses and was not defiling the temple.

Yet he had incurred the hostility of the Jews by advocating progress in religion, rejecting only the outworn ceremonial ele-

ments in the Mosaic system while holding to its essential spiritual teaching.

Their solidified conservatism had lost the power of growth and readjustment, and any change gave it a shock that filled it with alarm for its life. The change or advance from Judaism was too great for them to stand or understand, and it threw them into a frenzy of fear and hate.

They misunderstood the change and thought it was a fatal heresy and death to their religion, whereas it was new life and world-wide enlargement to their faith.

Change in religion is not always wrong, and when it is in the direction of growth we should beware of resisting it, lest we be found fighting against God.

2. Roman Soldiers Rescue Paul

The providential interference that saved Paul in the nick of time was effected through Roman soldiers, for God works through human agencies, and soldiers and policemen may be his servants, doing his will though they may know it not.

In the northwest corner of the temple area stood the Tower of Antonia, where Roman soldiers were stationed to keep order in that intense and dangerous center of Jewish life and fanaticism. Soldiers are stationed in Jerusalem, formerly by the Turkish government but since the Great War by the British government, to maintain order, especially at Christmas and Easter time, and it has been a scandal for centuries that these soldiers are on guard at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to keep peace between different sects of Christians.

Report that a riot was raging down in the temple area came up to the captain of the Roman garrison, and with soldierly promptness and thoroughness he took an armed force and hurried down into the midst of the mob. When the Jews saw the soldiers they quickly left off beating Paul. They had had experience of the terrible power and severity of the mailed hand of Cæsar, and the mere sight of these soldiers was enough for them.

Soldiers still have their place in our modern world.

The gospel of peace has not yet so saturated society that it needs no sword to keep it in order. The powers that be are ordained of God, and among these are armed men whose presence is a terror to evil doers

and brings peace. Not infrequently riots break out in our cities, destroying property and life, and policemen and soldiers are then the demand of the hour.

We cannot disperse a mob with rose-water, but must have steel and fire. Pandering to the mob spirit is a dangerous thing, and it must be curbed and put down with a strong hand.

3. The Demand of the Mob

The Roman captain ordered Paul to be handcuffed, and then inquired who the offender was and what he had done. Fury again broke loose, and the angry crowd became a mass of shouting men, some crying one thing, and some another. When they had to make a charge against Paul they did not agree.

Prejudice, when at last it becomes forced to explain itself, often finds it hard to give a reason for its unreason.

Gossips do not agree in their tales. Slanderers, when asked to be definite in their charges, often have nothing to say or grow confused and stammer out discordant stories. Men may be shouting out their hatred or prejudice against others, but if they were required to give definite specification and proof they would be put to shame.

We should be careful about uttering or giving currency to charges and rumors and insinuations that we cannot sustain.

The enemies of Christianity did not agree in this early day, and this is characteristic of them to this day.

There is lack enough of agreement and unity among Christians themselves, but if we go among its opponents we shall find confusion worse confounded. Infidelity is a babel of tongues, a chaos of unreason and prejudice.

The Roman captain saw that there was no hope of untying the tangle in the midst of such tumult, and so he commanded that the prisoner be brought up into the tower for judicial examination. When the stairs were reached, the throng became so great that the soldiers carried Paul.

The mob now saw that they were going to lose the hated renegade Jew and began crying out, "Away with him," the very same cry that was raised against Jesus when he was sent to the cross. "Kill him,"

was their demand, their quick remedy for this heresy, their decisive defense of their religion and the full satisfaction of their hatred.

The religious knot has often been cut with a sword.

Death has been regarded as the surest ecclesiastical discipline. A man's argument seems so conclusively answered when his head is off. A sword thrust that severs the tongue is so much quicker in bringing quiet than a reason that convinces the mind.

There is still lurking in us the disposition that makes us feel that we would like to get at a man who dares to differ from us on serious and sensitive points, especially in religion.

It has often turned out, however, that the prophet that had his head cut off keeps on talking long after his misguided murderers were buried in obloquy and oblivion.

Truth does not depend on the tongue that utters it, but may cry out louder long after the lips that first declared it have been silenced and withered into dust.

These Jews wanted to kill Paul, but today nobody knows who they were, their very names are long since forgotten, while we and millions of others are studying Paul's words. Many have been the prophets and pioneers of the world who have mounted the scaffold or laid their heads under the sword or stepped into flames in bearing witness to the truth, and our feet now safely walk in the path they broke through the wilderness and over bloody stones for us.

The supreme example of such truth-telling is Jesus himself, whose life was put out on the cross and is now the life of the world.

We are not subject to such tests in witnessing for Christ in our day and land, but there are still crosses for us to carry and there is many a call and crisis in which we are to quit ourselves like men.

4. Paul and the Roman Captain

While on the stairway Paul quietly said to the Roman captain, "May I say something unto thee?" This simple question proved the turning point in the tide. The captain expressed surprise that the prisoner addressed him in Greek and supposed that he was a certain Egyptian that had recently stirred up rebellion.

Paul answered, "I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city." Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia and a free Roman city, noted for its schools of literature and philosophy and ranked next to Athens and Alexandria among university towns.

Paul had a just pride in his native city.

He was a true patriot and was not afraid or ashamed of his record. He was willing that his critics and enemies should go to the city where he had been brought up and see how he had lived. Many a man under arrest conceals the city to which he belongs, but Paul had nothing to conceal.

Nothing would catch and compel the attention of the Roman officer quicker than Paul's announcement of his Roman citizenship in a Greek city, for such citizenship was a badge of protection and safety everywhere throughout the empire.

Having thus got the ear of the Roman captain, what did Paul request of him? That he would let his soldiers loose on that frenzied mob, shouting for Paul's life, to slaughter them and thus extinguish their cries in their blood? No, his request was, "I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people."

How magnificently does Paul's Christian spirit rise above any thought of hatred or even of justice towards his enemies, and how grandly does his heart go out towards them in love!

Standing on that stairway he showed the spirit of him who not far away from that very place prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Paul wanted no Roman sword or chain for his people, but he only wanted to speak to them in words of truth and kindness and love.

He caught this spirit from Christ himself, and we have not fully come into faith in and fellowship with Christ until we have the same spirit in us towards our enemies.

5. Paul's Speech on the Stairway

Our lesson does not contain Paul's notable speech on the stairway addressed to his people, but it is so essential to the complete story that we briefly outline it.

It told again the wonderful story of his own conversion.

He recounted to them his Jewish birth and orthodoxy and his persecution of the Christians and told of the marvelous light that shone upon him out of heaven and the voice he had heard. Finally he reached the point where he told of his mission to the Gentiles.

All this was etched on Paul's memory so vividly that he could not forget or miss any detail of it.

He was about to appeal to them to believe on the name of Christ as their Messiah, when he was interrupted at the mention of the hated Gentiles by their cries, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live," and they threw off their garments and cast dust into the air.

At this point the Roman captain again intervened and took Paul back into the tower and asked him, "Tell me, art thou a Roman?" "And he said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship." Then Paul proudly answered, "But I am a Roman born."

Paul was a Jew by blood, a Greek by birth and education, and a freeborn Roman citizen, and by these high titles he held a superior place in the civilization of his day.

And with a great price our freedom was purchased for us.

Other men laid down their lives to break the fetters of tyranny and their blood has become our blessing; they burst their bonds and transmuted them into our liberty.

So also has our spiritual freedom been purchased at a still greater price, and it even cost the blood of the Son of God.

We ought to appreciate and rightly use what cost others so much and yet is our free gift.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Why did Paul go to Jerusalem at this time?
2. How did Roman soldiers come to be in Jerusalem?
3. How do English soldiers come to be there now?
4. What price has been paid for our civil and religious liberty?
5. In what ways can we bear testimony to Christian truth and life?

LESSON VIII—NOVEMBER 22

Paul in Rome

Lesson: Acts 25:1–12; 28:16–30.

Golden Text: I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 2:2–4.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Prisoner Proclaims the Gospel in Rome.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Paul's Ministry in the World's Capital.

Lesson Text: Acts 28:16–24, 30–31

16 And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans:

18 Who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation.

20 For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and to speak with *me:* for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters from Judæa concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded *the matter,* testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

30 And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. Paul Explains His Position.

2. A Sect Everywhere Spoken Against.

3. An All-Day Sermon.
4. Lost Spiritual Sensibility.
5. Paul Turns to the Gentiles.

In Rome at last! the world-magnet that drew all important men and movements, the attraction and fascination of which Paul had long felt and to which he had now come. The metropolis of the world with its two million inhabitants sat on its seven hills and bore the proud but vain name of the Eternal City.

All roads ran to its center, all power radiated from its throne, and around its huge hub revolved the far-flung rim of the empire.

From its marble Forum stretched in every direction miles of public buildings, fashionable streets and costly palaces, splendid avenues, triumphal arches, magnificent aqueducts, intermingled with slums of poverty and vice. All the world had been taxed to enrich this city. Art and learning were already stealing away from Athens and making it the university city of the world.

Paul at length had arrived, not as he had supposed he would, but bound in chains as a prisoner.

He was living in his own house, but a soldier was always at his side and, with every movement of his hand his chain clanked. Yet he was incomparably the greatest man in that city beside whom Nero the Emperor shrank into insignificant worthlessness. Paul's bonds could not bind the truth, but "fell out rather to the furtherance of the gospel."

Here he preached to Jews and Gentiles and sent the gospel message up into the very palace of Cæsar and wrote letters that are today circulating in the spiritual life-blood of the world.

1. Paul Explains His Position

After three days in which we may suppose he was resting and arranging his affairs, Paul was ready for work.

The prisoner was bound, but the preacher was free.

The Word of God cannot be bound anywhere, and whatever is our condition we can always speak and live the gospel.

Paul began as usual with the Jews. When they were assembled he first made a brief statement of his case. In every such statement Paul

always stood on and started from conservative ground and so he put in the forefront the fact that he had "done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers." He addressed them as brethren and spoke to them as a loyal Jew and thus set himself before them in a favorable light.

Yet notwithstanding this fact, he had been delivered a prisoner to the Romans, who, when they had examined him, found no cause of death in him and should have released him had not the Jews objected and thus forced him to appeal to Cæsar.

This appeal to Cæsar, however, bore a suspicious look to the Jews, implying treachery to his own country, and Paul was careful to explain that he had no charge against his nation. For this reason he had entreated them to see and hear him; and he concluded with the declaration, "for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." This "hope of Israel" was the hope of the Messiah, culminating in the hope of the resurrection of the dead. It was this faithfulness to his ancestral faith that had brought him bound from Jerusalem to Rome.

The faith that freed his heart fettered his hands, and this strange contradiction is sometimes experienced in our lives.

2. A Sect Everywhere Spoken Against

The Jews answered that they had received no letters or reports against him, but they desired to hear him: "for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is everywhere spoken against."

Christianity had already got into the general news of the world and common report represented it as something scandalous.

It was a "sect" of the Jews, which was bad enough; Christians were declared to be "the enemies of mankind," and they were charged with worshiping a crucified ass and drinking the blood of slaughtered infants at their religious feast. Rome rang with these rumors, and three years later when Nero, to shield himself, charged them with having set fire to the city, the infuriated populace saw Christians thrown to wild beasts in the arena and burned as torches in Nero's gardens with shouts of frenzied delight. "Everywhere spoken against" was thus the report that met Paul in Rome.

But has any great cause and movement escaped this fate?

Was not Christ himself spoken against from the opening hour of his ministry down to his last expiring cry on the cross? and shall the disciple be above the Master? Call the roll of the great prophets and apostles of all ages and have they not almost without exception been spoken against? Every prophet runs the risk of being stoned by his own generation, and it is not until the next generation or several generations later that his tomb will be built and enriched with costly decorations.

And can any present reform and forward movement in church or state, religion or politics, hope for any better reception?

Truth must always fight its way through opposition and obloquy to triumph. Even science cannot tell the world a new truth without being spoken against and its prophets have at times written their discoveries with their blood. It is almost a sign of truth and righteousness and a certificate of good character to be spoken against by this world.

Conventional respectability and popularity are not sure signs and accompaniments of world-shaking names and movements; these are rather things to be feared and despised by the prophet and reformer who wants to roll the world out of its self-satisfied stagnation and sin and push it forward into light.

3. An All-Day Sermon

A day was now set apart for a more extended hearing of Paul, and at the appointed time the Jews were present in his house in great number. Paul preached to them an all-day sermon, for at times he was unconscionably long in his sermons and once preached a young man asleep so that he fell out of the window in which he was sitting. Paul endeavored to persuade the Jews, "testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets."

Again he takes the Jews on their own ground and proves the Messiahship of Christ out of their own Scriptures.

He would have them know that the new gospel is simply the old faith blossoming out into its perfect flower and ripening its finest fruit. Paul thus removed Christianity out of the category of new notions that are antagonistic to the old faith and set it forth as the old faith in a new

and more perfect form, the brighter light of the noonday as compared with the twilight of the morning.

Christ does not destroy Moses any more than the fruit destroys the root, but Christ fulfils Moses as the flower the seed.

"And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved."

It is an honest record in an honest book that writes down such a damaging fact on its page.

Luke did not glorify Paul by making it out that all his hearers believed him, but while claiming partial success he also boldly acknowledges partial failure.

When a presidential campaign splits the country and seven or eight millions vote on one side and nearly as many millions vote on the other side, what divides them?

Just this that some believe and some disbelieve the things that are spoken.

The widest chasm among men is the moral difference in their character and conduct, and at the bottom of this lies a difference in practical belief: some believe the things that are spoken concerning God and Christ and some disbelieve them.

At this point men exercise their spiritual sovereignty and choose one or the other side and must bear the responsibility for their choice and action.

Such decisions may go deep into life and far out into destiny.

4. Lost Spiritual Sensibility

The Jews were a divided audience, as is every congregation, but before they parted Paul had one final word. It was only a word he had to say, but it was a word of tremendous significance. This word also Paul quoted from one of their own prophets, out of their own Scriptures he hurled on them this fiery bolt of condemnation. The quotation is couched in the startling language of paradox, but its meaning is plain. "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall in no wise perceive" (Isaiah 6:9–10).

These people had all the faculties of hearing and sight, thought and

will, conscience and responsibility, but through disuse and disobedience they had dulled and indurated these so that they could not perceive and receive truth and righteousness. The subjects of special revelation, as the chosen people were, they had become hardened against it; the children of the day had become children of the night. The light that was in them had turned to darkness, and then how great was that darkness!

This possibility is one of the most fatal dangers of life.

Every faculty physical and spiritual, through disuse or abuse, loses its sensitivity and may degenerate into death. The eye that can catch the mighty pulsations of the sun and mirror the glories of the earth and sky, by persistently closing its lid, can forget the sun, lose its cunning and lapse into endless night.

Conscience is subject to the same deterioration and death.

We cannot disbelieve truth and turn from Jesus Christ and be as good as ever; already some light has faded from our eyes, some spiritual sensitivity is lost.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

5. Paul Turns to the Gentiles

Paul now parted from these Jewish unbelievers with a solemn declaration: " Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear." The Jews were given the first chance, but they could not thwart the grace of God by rejecting it; what they refused others would receive, and despised Gentiles should pass into the kingdom of God before them.

We may shut our own eyes, but the sun will shine for other eyes and the beauty and glory of the world shall not be hid.

We may exclude ourselves from the redeemed, but the grace of God will be admitted into other hearts and the Saviour of the world shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

The visit of Paul to Rome, so long the object of his desire and no doubt of great expectations, may seem to us to have ended in failure that would be a great disappointment if not a heartbreak to him. But Paul was used to such partial success shadowed with partial failure and was not expecting that the gospel would suddenly overturn the world.

After all, he had made a notable contribution to the church in Rome and yet had further work to do there.

Any new force and impetus given to the gospel in that strategic center would radiate out around the empire and help to reshape the world. The church in Rome became a powerful one and in no small degree owed its importance and power to the work of Paul in that city.

The gospel still has a special affinity for great cities and everywhere seeks to plant its churches and administrative agencies at these central points where they will command wide fields of influence.

At this point Luke abruptly closes the Book of Acts: "And he abode two years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." This record is true of Paul in every word and sums up his life from the hour when he fell under the splendor of Christ's presence and power on his way to Damascus to the hour when he fell under the executioner's sword at Rome.

Luke closes his record at this place probably because he wrote his book at this point in Paul's life when he knew no more to tell because no more had yet happened. Tradition releases the great apostle from his first imprisonment for further missionary work and brings him back a few years later for final imprisonment and death.

We have several more letters from his hand written in this later period, but his work, as far as history records, is now done, and the greatest leader we have seen since Moses passes from our view.

But of hardly any other human being is it so grandly true that "he being dead yet speaketh."

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. How did Rome come to be such a great city?
2. What is the place of modern Rome in the Christian church and world?
3. Is the Old Testament still of value in preaching the gospel?
4. Why is it that some believe and some disbelieve the gospel?
5. Is the loss of spiritual sensibility a just penalty for disobedience?

LESSON IX—NOVEMBER 29

Paul's Letter to Philemon

Lesson: Philemon.

Golden Text: There can be neither bond nor free . . . for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28.

Devotional Reading: 1 John 4:7–13.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: A Slave Made a Brother.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Christ Transforming Social Relationships.

Lesson Text: Philemon 1:4–20

4 I thank my God always, making mention of thee in my prayers,

5 Hearing of thy love, and of the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints;

6 That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ.

7 For I had much joy and comfort in thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother.

8 Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting,

9 Yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus:

10 I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus,

11 Who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me:

12 Whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart:

13 Whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel:

14 But without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will.

15 For perhaps he was therefore parted *from thee* for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever;

16 No longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself.

18 But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth *thee* aught, put that to mine account;

19 I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.

20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my heart in Christ.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***Onesimus the Slave.***
2. ***The Converted Slave Returned to His Owner.***
3. ***But No Longer a Slave.***
4. ***Philemon's Indebtedness to Paul.***
5. ***A Hint at Manumission.***

This little letter is the gem among Paul's Epistles and is one of the most beautiful and as well as one of the most profoundly significant things in the Bible.

It suggests and prepares the way for a face-about in the world's civilization: it sounds the doom of slavery.

Onesimus was a Greek slave who had probably robbed and then run away from his master, Philemon, in Colosse, and turned up in Rome, the whirlpool towards which all the flotsam and jetsam of the world then drifted. Here Paul found him and converted him and became dearly attached to him.

Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon carrying with him this letter in which he graciously and with the most delicate and beautiful tact negotiated the ticklish business of restoring the slave to his master, but under new conditions in which the old relation of ownership was transformed and transfigured into Christian brotherhood.

1. Onesimus the Slave

The Bible sets all sorts and conditions of men in its gallery of portraits and we have had passed before us in our lessons kings and prophets, statesmen and soldiers, princes and peasants, preachers and missionaries, but here is a lesson devoted to a slave. Even our Revised Version unfortunately continues to soften and fails to give the full force of the original by translating it "servant," whereas its real meaning is "slave" and this word should be permitted to fall upon us in all its raw and harsh sound and significance.

Onesimus was owned by Philemon, a citizen of Colosse near Ephesus, who had been converted under the ministry of Paul, probably while he was laboring in that city. This slave, having fallen under the influence of Paul, became something more than an ordinary convert and evidently had an attractive personality and noble qualities, for Paul fell in love with him and repeatedly uses endearing terms in referring to him. The apostle speaks of the slave as "my child" and "my very heart" and manifests the warmest and most tender personal affection for him.

Two more widely contrasted persons than Paul and Onesimus could hardly be imagined: the one an eminent man in intellectual and spiritual genius who was just closing a great career, and the other a thief and an escaped slave who belonged to a low and degraded class. Yet the apostle

is entirely unconscious of any such differences and knows Onesimus only as a Christian brother and dear friend.

It was the gospel of Christ that bridged this wide and ordinarily impassable chasm and brought these two men together and made them one in Christ.

From the top of intellectual attainment and power Paul reached down to the bottom of society and out of its dregs lifted up this fugitive slave. It is a striking illustration of the power of the gospel to obliterate all superficial distinctions and bind men of all classes into one brotherhood.

Paul practiced what he preached. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 1:28).

The gospel has this spirit and power of dissolving external distinctions of birth and breed and social conditions and making us of one mind and heart in Christ.

2. The Converted Slave Returned to His Owner

The problem now arose, What is to be done with the convert who was still the legal slave of Philemon? Shall Paul continue to give refuge to Onesimus on the ground that Philemon had no right to him; and shall Onesimus refuse to go back to his owner? There was no hesitation on this point on the part either of Paul or of Onesimus.

Paul sent the slave back to his master, probably carrying this little letter with him, and the slave willingly went back, and thus both of them recognized the hard legal fact of the situation.

Paul would have liked to keep Onesimus as a personal attendant "that he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel." But he would take no such advantage of his friend Philemon as to keep his slave without the friend's knowledge and consent: "but without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will." Paul might very well have assumed that Philemon would be willing that he should retain Onesimus, but he would not act on any such assumption and returned Onesimus to his owner.

This illustrates the perfect candor that should obtain among friends.

Paul did not venture to interpret Philemon's rights or wishes for him, but allowed him to decide the point for himself. Friendship is careful of mutual rights and obligations and does not presume to take an advantage on this ground. There are some rights that even friendship must not intrude upon, some points it should not pass.

Every one has around him a certain limit or barrier of privacy and self-respect as well as of right which his nearest friend should not rudely break through. Even when desiring favors of a friend we should not put him in a position in which we are forcing him to accede to our desires, but should leave him the liberty of expressing his friendship and love in his own way.

3. But No Longer a Slave

Paul returned Onesimus to his master Philemon, and yet no longer as a slave. This letter that Onesimus put in his master's hand was enveloped in such an atmosphere and breathed such a spirit as put master and slave in a very different relation.

Paul plays upon this point in the most suggestive and winning way and gently but firmly presses it home.

He tells Philemon that " perhaps " he lost his slave that he might get him back in an endless relation, " that thou shouldest have him forever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord."

A new bond now held these men together that in its very nature dissolved the old bond.

The old bondage was a hard and harsh relation in which the slave scarcely had any rights the master was bound to respect. Roman slavery was arbitrary and cruel beyond anything we have known in our modern world. A Roman master once crucified two thousand slaves and strung their crosses along the Appian way; and the dreadful thing about this fact was not that he did it but that he had a legal right to do it and no voice was raised against it. Such a relation became impossible between Christian brothers redeemed by Christ and fashioned into his image.

Paul trusted Philemon to receive and treat Onesimus in this new relation and work out its proper consequences.

How much depends in all our social relations and problems on the spirit in which we regard and deal with one another? Friendship is impossible on any basis of arbitrary assumption of superior right and haughty demeanor on one or the other side, and it can only live in an atmosphere of mutual respect and love.

The same spirit will go far towards solving social problems arising out of the relations of capital and labor and of employers and employes.

If this relation is conducted on a basis of hard legal rights and superior power, then one side will exact as much and the other will give as little as possible in a spirit of grudging unwillingness and resentment that will breed hatred and violence and work irreparable injury to both sides and to the public in general. But if this relation is conducted in an atmosphere of brotherhood with a keen sense of justice and generosity on both sides, each sincerely desiring to do the best for the other, the relation will work smoothly and profitably all around.

A great need of our modern world is to eliminate any surviving relic not only of the form but of the spirit of slavery from our social order and to immerse it in an atmosphere of Christian brotherhood and love.

4. Philemon's Indebtedness to Paul

Paul now puts forward another plea with Philemon. The favor in this friendship was not all on one side. Paul is asking something of Philemon, but does not Philemon owe something to Paul? Who led Philemon out of the slavery of the mind and heart into the liberty of Christ? Paul will gladly make good any loss Philemon has sustained at the hands of Onesimus, and he will do this without saying unto him "that thou owest me even thine own self besides."

He will not say it, but he will allude to it in unmistakable terms and thus suggest it to Onesimus in this indirect way.

Philemon's debt to Paul was incomparably greater than any loss Paul could make good to Philemon because of this runaway slave.

It is always so in friendship: its obligations are mutual, its gains are on both sides, but they may be of different kinds.

One friend may give one kind of gain to another and receive another kind of greater value. While Philemon is granting a favor to Paul, let him not forget what Paul has done for him. We all owe our friends more than we ever can repay them on any commercial basis.

Especially do we owe any one who has led us into larger light in the Christian life and in the fields of truth and service a debt that cannot be measured in terms of material benefits. On this principle we owe Christ an infinite debt and should devote all we have and are to him.

5. A Hint at Manumission

Paul now ventures on delicate ground and hints at something he does not care to mention in express words, and such indirect and gentle approach to difficult matters is often more effective than a frontal approach and bold attack. "Having confidence in thine obedience I write to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say."

Who could resist that assurance of confidence and fine compliment?

Often we can trust our friends to do better than we ask and it is an honor to a friend thus to trust his larger and better self.

But why did Paul not demand the emancipation of this slave from his master as the Christian world has long since done? Because the time for this had not yet come.

Nowhere does the Bible make this demand, a fact that embarrassed the abolitionists in our former history.

There is a time for everything and great forward steps can be taken only when conditions are ready for them.

Slavery in the ancient world was so deeply rooted in law and custom and social ideas that it could not be suddenly torn up by violent means. Only time could work such changes in the mental and moral climate of the world that this old evil would fall out of adjustment with its environment and begin to wither and decline, and then the sword or other violent means could give it its finishing stroke, as in our Civil

War. Yet even the Civil War did not aim at doing this directly, but this was one of its indirect results.

It would have been of little use to attempt the absolute prohibition of the liquor traffic in our early history, but we had first to circumscribe it and cut away its roots and finally got it where we could close in on it with a strangle hold. David perforated Goliath's head with a small stone before he could cut it off.

This preparatory warfare is often a long process that we must patiently fight through before we can write the Emancipation Proclamation and the Eighteenth Amendment.

This is what Paul was doing in this letter.

He did not make an outright demand for emancipation, but he did breathe into this relation through this letter a spirit which in time was a silent but powerful influence in abolishing it. In fact this little letter put a charge of dynamite under the institution of slavery which did help to blow it out of the world: or it diffused through the atmosphere of civilization a spirit of humanity and brotherhood which in the course of the Christian centuries dissolved the fetters of slavery as the balmy breath of spring melts the icy bonds of winter.

Verily the hand of Paul in penning this brief letter reached through the ages and helped to write, along with the hand of Abraham Lincoln, the American Emancipation Proclamation.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. For Roman slavery see the article on Slavery in the Encyclopædia Britannica.
2. What is friendship?
3. What are some of the dangers that beset friendship?
4. What points in true friendship does Paul illustrate in this letter?
5. What put slavery out of the world?
6. What are some things we should avoid in advocating reforms?

LESSON X—DECEMBER 6

Rome and Beyond

Lesson: Romans 15:22–29; 2 Timothy 4:6–18; Titus 1:5–16; 3:11–14.

Golden Text: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7.

Devotional Reading: Philippians 3:7–14.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: The Missionary Work Goes On.

Topic for Young People and Adults: Unto the Ends of the Earth.

Lesson Text: 2 Timothy 4:6–18

6 For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come.
7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith:
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.
9 Give diligence to come shortly unto me:
10 For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.
11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is useful to me for ministering.
12 But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus.
13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.
14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will render to him according to his works:
15 Of whom do thou also beware; for he greatly withstood our words.
16 At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account.
17 But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.
18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. A Solemn Charge.
2. Impending Defection.
3. Already Being Offered.
4. A Crown of Righteousness.
5. Personal Notes and Final Words.

The Second Epistle to Timothy is the last writing we have from the hand of Paul. It was written in Rome near the end of his second imprisonment, a short time before his execution under Nero, to Timothy probably in Ephesus. This second imprisonment of the Christian apostle was much harsher than the first and was probably passed in the terrible Mamertine prison. Paul was now an old man, broken in health, suffering from the damp and cold (4:13), deserted of friends except the faithful Luke, and he piteously begs Timothy to bring Mark and come to him.

Yet the letter written in these distressful circumstances breathes an air of unflinching faith and courage.

We here see the battle-scarred veteran penning his last pathetic words and reaching forth his hand to receive his crown. We include in our exposition the whole chapter as verses 1–5 contain some of Paul's most important counsels to Timothy.

1. A Solemn Charge

The aged apostle gives a solemn charge to the young evangelist to preach the word.

This charge is projected on the background of mighty realities and motives.

Paul admonishes Timothy "in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom." Christianity never gives short-sighted views and trivial reasons, but frames its motives in infinities and eternities.

These great verities slope up from us and are soon lost to our little vision in the mysteries of the infinite and eternal, and yet they are near us, even in our hearts.

The universal elements of the world, such as air and light, gravitation and starshine, soon transcend our understanding, and yet they suffuse our whole being and by them we must live. The presence of God and Christ and the kingdom should envelop us as an atmosphere and penetrate to the core of our hearts, keeping us alive and alert to these spiritual realities and putting divine pressure upon us in all our ways.

Overshadowed by these verities, Timothy was to "preach the word."

This " word " was not the Gospels of the New Testament, which were not yet in general circulation and some of them not yet in existence, but the gospel or truth concerning Christ who is himself the supreme Word of God.

The business of the minister and teacher is to present truth so that it will lay hold of the mind and conscience and move the will.

All legitimate means are to be used to illuminate and enforce this truth, to give it point and pungency, freshness and force. What gospel truth often needs in our preaching and teaching is a new cutting edge. Timothy was to " be urgent in season, out of season": he was not only to preach at regular services and on stated occasions, but was to embrace every opportunity of imparting the gospel; and these wayside, incidental and often apparently accidental ministries are often unexpectedly fruitful in results, as was Philip's wayside ministry down at Gaza, which " the same is desert," where he found his most important convert.

The Christian ministry must not degenerate into mere professionalism, but should be a constant service adapted to all changing conditions.

In his preaching the young minister was to " reprove, rebuke, exhort" his preaching was not to be one monotonous strain, a continuous web from which every sermon was cut off with the same pattern and colors but was to be varied and adapted to different occasions and classes. The minister cannot always speak smooth words, but sometimes must use sharp speech and strike sin hard. Yet this should never be done in a harsh high-tempered spirit, but always with long suffering and patience.

2. Impending Defection

The young evangelist was next warned against impending defection and degeneracy. The time was near when professing Christians would not endure healthful doctrine, but would have itching ears and heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts.

Paul knew human nature well enough to know that it would not always stand the truth; already he saw signs of restlessness, and his prophetic eye saw what was coming.

All this came to pass in the swarm of heresies that swept over the early church. Pagan error, having failed to conquer Christianity, tried to amalgamate itself with it, and the result was a numerous brood of hybrid cults.

This process is still working in the universal fermentation of the world.

The truth often stings the ears and cuts into the conscience and is a very uncomfortable companion in life. People that do not want to conform themselves to the truth naturally want the truth to be conformed to them, and the quickest way of changing the teaching is to change the teacher.

There are in almost every congregation itching ears that want to be tickled rather than taught.

Human nature is not naturally friendly to spiritual truth and desires preaching that will not prick its sin but please its taste. And it can generally get what it wants. There are always teachers that will accommodate their teaching to the times and shape the supply to suit the demand.

It is folly for us to try to find truth by following our lusts, or to escape truthful teaching by rejecting the teacher.

Those that "turn their ears from the truth" "turn aside unto fables." This was abundantly illustrated in the early church when nothing was too absurd to be believed and the most fantastic fables were accepted in place of sober truth.

Nothing is so credulous as incredulity.

The sceptic that loftily disclaims faith is often found to be believing in some uncanny mystery that easily puts Christian faith to the blush. People that reject miracles as incredible often believe in spirit-rappings and ghosts galore. The human mind abhors scepticism and agnosticism as nature abhors a vacuum. Faith is its natural food, and when it rejects truth it soon turns aside to fables. It may even reject bread and then take a stone.

This defection and degeneracy were not to discourage Timothy, but was only to increase his watchfulness and gird him up for endurance that he might do the work of an evangelist.

The prevalence of error must not relax our preaching of the truth, and we must continue to teach and live the gospel whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

3. Already Being Offered

The aged apostle now lays additional and heavy responsibility on his young associate by virtually passing over to him the mantle of his ministry, and his words suddenly become charged with lofty and solemn eloquence as he writes of his approaching departure. "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come." His very life is being poured out in that damp dungeon as an offering for his faith.

He knew the end was near and that others must carry on the work.

Yet how calmly and triumphantly he writes. Death was not darkness to him, but only departure; departure out of the foul dungeon into the glory-lighted city that is crowded with the beatific splendor of God. The flash of the sword that would sever his head from his body would be for him the first gleam of that glory streaming through the gates ajar.

The calm and courageous faith that inspired him was no sudden impulse or acquisition, but was rooted in a life of faithfulness; his victory was the last stroke and shout of a long battle. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

Paul had kept his faith, and yet it was a larger and richer faith at the end of his career than at its beginning.

He had not kept his faith as a finished and final thing that could not change, not as a jewel that is kept in a box and can add no increase to its luster and beauty; but he had kept it as a root that grows and blooms into larger and lovelier life. We should keep our faith through discouragement and doubt, and yet we should not keep it shut in from all change and growth, but should let it expand and unfold into an ever richer and more fruitful faith and life.

With such a record behind him Paul could calmly face death before him, and faithful living is ever the surest preparation for triumphant dying.

4. A Crown of Righteousness

From his record Paul now turns to his reward: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

> Righteousness is not the whole of its own reward: it has a splendid future in which it shall wear a worthy crown.

The saint that is torn to pieces with the iron teeth of adverse circumstances, or is ground down under the oppressor's heel or the proud world's contumely, shall at last be lifted to a throne and shall rule.

> The best people are entitled to the best places, and in time shall get them.

Yet this reward is "the crown of righteousness." It is not a material crown of jeweled gold, but a spiritual crown wrought on the soul itself. The spirits of just men made perfect are themselves crowns.

> This internal crown of righteousness is the highest reward of faith and faithfulness, though it shall also be set on a throne amid the glories of the celestial city.

Paul, however, could not speak of his own reward without making room for the equal reward of others. "And not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." Paul would have no selfish exclusive crown.

Why did William II of Germany, when he came to his throne, quickly retire Bismarck? Because that Prime Minister, blazing with distinction, obscured the brightness of the young emperor's crown. That inordinately vain youth (Alas for his pride, how he has fallen!) could brook no competition with himself in the public gaze. He said in effect, "I will have this crown myself and no man shall dim its brightness or share a ray of its glory. And so the man of iron who had made Germany had to take himself off into obscurity and die of a broken heart, an act that is now declared to have been one of the initial causes of the Great War: if so, time has its own revenges.

Now note the language of Paul when he was about to receive a crown: "and not to me only, but also to all those that have loved his appearing." How splendid are the words, "and not to me only!" Paul

would take nothing for himself that he could not let others have also. In crowning himself he did not discrown the humblest believer.

In the Christian life there are crowns for us all, for we are all kings and priests unto God. In the kingdom of heaven no one puts himself up by pushing others down, but in its broad fellowship we are all crowned together.

5. Personal Notes and Final Words

The concluding verses of this letter abound in interesting personal notes and human touches that bring the great apostle near to us all. He wants Timothy to hasten to him and to bring Mark—that Mark he once refused to have with him and separated himself from him, but now he wants him close to his heart.

Paul knew how to correct a mistaken judgment and to give a man a second chance.

He wants his cloak, for he is cold, and his books, for he had nothing to read and the scholar is still alive in him and wants to keep on widening his knowledge and experience. How much would the world give to know what these books were and to have copies of them! Some old fire flashes out of him as he remembers "Alexander the coppersmith" who did me "a lot of harm," and of whom Timothy is to beware.

He has had his first hearing before the Roman court and knew the pang of loneliness, sharper than a serpent's tooth, of deserting friends.

Yet the Lord stood by him and enabled him to preach the truth even at his trial.

He is calmly confident that the Lord shall deliver him from every evil and save him unto the heavenly kingdom: "to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." A few more personal notes, a final benediction, and the letter ends. Presently the hand which had written so many letters that had instructed and comforted so many minds and hearts and are yet blessing the world, lay still upon the blood-stained sand.

At one stroke of the executioner's sword there flashed upon him that crown of righteousness that shall shine as the stars forever and ever.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Who was Timothy and how did he come to be associated with Paul?
2. What are some defections from Christian faith today?
3. May we win and wear the crown of righteousness now?
4. Is the heavenly kingdom also in this world?
5. Name the letters of Paul and state the purpose of each one.

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 13

John's Vision on Patmos

Lesson: Revelation 1:1–3:22.

Golden Text: Fear not; I am the first, and the last, and the Living one. Revelation 1:17, 18.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:42–49.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: John Sees the Ever-living Christ.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Glorified Saviour.

Lesson Text: Revelation 1:4–18

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood;

6 And he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be* priests unto his God and Father; to him *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience *which are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God was the testimony of Jesus.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet

11 Saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

14 And his head and his hair were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last,

18 And the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.
1. *The Seer.*
2. *The Ascription to Christ.*
3. *In the Spirit on the Lord's Day.*
4. *A Dazzling Vision.*
5. *Fallen as One Dead.*
6. *A Commission to Write.*

The Revelation of John is a moving-picture of the battlefield of good and evil. Giant armies of light and darkness are here contending in a death-struggle for the mastery. Lightnings shoot through the gloom, thunder rolls through the air, blood crimsons the field. At times the scene is one of wild confusion and we know not which way the battle is going.

But at length the triumphant shout goes up, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." And so through these weird scenes we see Christ "marching in the greatness of his strength" and winning an everlasting victory.

The language is that of poetry casting upon the screen of the imagination these apocalyptic pictures, and therefore they do not admit of literal interpretation.

We can project all kinds of theories into them, but it is best to take their grand impression without insisting on detailed meaning and application.

The purpose of the book was plain to those to whom it was addressed, and we can see its broad meaning.

It was a time when the world was being rocked to pieces with war and social convulsion, and Christianity was under the fire and sword of deadly persecution. Christians were being put to death for refusing to worship "the Beast" or the Roman Emperor, and no believer knew at what moment his hour would come.

It meant something to be a Christian and stand by one's faith in such a time.

One flash of a Roman sword and his blood would stain the sand. At this moment of darkness and despair the Seer sounded a note of inspiring faith and ultimate victory.

1. The Seer

The seer who writes the book names himself John. He writes himself down as plain John without any honorary titles or dignities. Some think he is John the apostle, but he does not so name himself or give other indication of what John he is.

The point is immaterial and may be left undecided.

Though he had just come down from this mount of transfiguration, yet he identifies himself with his distressed readers as "your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus." So he keeps down on a level with the humblest believers and shares with them their trials.

However Christians may differ in gifts and offices, they are all brothers and must travel the same pathway of labor and often of hardships.

This John was a prisoner on the seagirt rock of Patmos, off from the Asiatic shore, not for any crime he had done but "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." The Roman Emperor, at this time the cruel and blood-thirsty Domitian, was enjoying the luxuries and pleasures of his palace, but this prophet of truth and righteousness was not only a prisoner but was probably serving in the copper mines of this island.

The world has made some huge mistakes in the men it has imprisoned and has often got hold of the wrong man.

If the worst man in the world had been chained upon that barren rock and the best man in the world had been upon the throne, Domitian and John would have exchanged places. The worst men are seldom put in jail. Carlyle said that if the worst man in England could be picked out, he would probably be found in the House of Lords.

The prophets of the race are misunderstood and persecuted in every age.

It is remarkable how much of the Bible was written in jail. This helps to make it a prisoner's book, proclaiming liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

2. The Ascription to Christ

The prisoner pays a wonderful tribute to Jesus Christ, " who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Jesus had now been gone from the world for about two-thirds of a century, but these early disciples, though surrounded with a sea of blood and chained as slaves in a copper mine, had not lost faith in him: rather had their faith mounted into mastery over all worldly conditions and they were increasingly sure of him as their Lord.

And he was yet to come: " Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen."

God himself now appears on the Seer's page and declares: " I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

The early disciples expected Jesus to come visibly in the clouds in their day in accordance with the prevailing apocalyptic views, and while Jesus has not yet so come, yet he is ever coming in his providence to sustain his people and work out his purposes.

Our faith may not have the precise form of that of these early believers, but we have the same glorified Christ in whom we believe and we should have the same vivid reality in our faith as that which so mightily sustained and inspired them.

3. In the Spirit on the Lord's Day

Though he was imprisoned on a rocky islet, yet John " was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This is the first mention in the New Testament of " the Lord's day," which became with the early Christians a name for the first day of the week on which Jesus rose.

Circumstances can control the outside of our lives, but we can control the inside.

It may be barren as a rock and galling as a prisoner's chains outside, and yet inside we may be in the Spirit and be caught up into the third heaven. The reason we do not see more heavenly visions and that life does not oftener become a grand inspiration to us is that we are not always in the Spirit.

Being in the Spirit, John heard a great voice as of a trumpet, signifying its majesty and power.

> God is not a silent God, but has sent out many voices through the world bearing witness of him, and he speaks in clearest tones through Jesus Christ, who is the Word or Speech of God.

What John saw he was to write in a book and send it to the seven churches of Asia, whose names were definitely given.

> This shows that the messages of this Revelation were not fanciful visions directed to nobody in particular, but were personal and pointed in their teaching and application. They are given in chapters 2–3, and are replete in helpful instruction and admonition.

4. A Dazzling Vision

John now saw a dazzling vision of seven candlesticks of burnished gold flashing light. This image symbolized the seven churches of Asia and consequently all churches. The purity and preciousness of the churches are seen in the gold candlesticks and the central figure; the individuality and independence of the churches are seen in the separate candlesticks; and the mission of the churches as light-givers is seen in the radiance emitted by them.

In the midst of the candlesticks stood a glorious person like unto the son of man, the risen and glorified Christ. His position in the midst of these candlesticks shows his relation to the churches as always ruling over them and abiding with them. His long garment is a priestly robe and the golden girdle is a kingly badge; Christ is eternal Priest and King.

The white hair may indicate the stainless purity and the dignity and wisdom of age. The flashing eyes of fire reveal searching omniscience and swift-moving energy. The feet like unto brass show great strength and stability. The voice as the sound of many waters speaks in far-reaching tones of majesty and authority.

The seven stars in his right hand are the angels or pastors of the seven churches. The two-edged sword issuing from his mouth is his

word which is living and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The countenance shining as the sun reveals him irradiated with glory as on the mount of transfiguration.

This description of Christ if taken literally would be grotesque, but taken figuratively and poetically it kindles the imagination with a sense of his supreme majesty and beauty. Yet all material images and splendors are pitifully poor in comparison with spiritual realities and glories and can give us only hints of him who is the very image of God and the effulgence of his glory.

5. Fallen as One Dead

At the sight of this vision John fell bereft of his senses and lay "as one dead." Too much light blinds the eyes. There are things that we could not see or that it would not be well for us to see, as they might unhinge our reason and lay us flat on the ground.

We can now see all that we need and that is good for us if we will only exercise the vision of faith we now have.

John "fell at the feet" of the glorified Christ, and that is always a safe place for us to fall. No harm can come to us there.

Jesus now touched John and gave him a message of assurance, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

This absolute sovereignty of the risen and glorified Christ is a reason why we should fear him if we are at enmity with him; but if we are lying submissively at his feet it is a reason why we should trust him and have perfect peace.

We lay hold of his omnipotence as the blade of grass lays hold with its roots upon the great globe, and the stronger he is, the safer we are.

In these days when the material universe is expanding into such inconceivable spaces and speeds and power, we are at times stricken with the fear that it is all simply a mass of brute matter that will presently fall on us and crush us into dust. Here is a vision of faith that puts in the center of all material greatness One who is a supreme and all-powerful Spirit that irradiates the whole universe with his presence and

assures us that matter is only dust under his feet and that he reigns over all.

This is a view and a vision that should put spirit in us and cause us to stand on our feet and forevermore fight the good fight of faith and win the victory that overcomes the world.

6. A Commission to Write.

Jesus next gave John a mission to perform: "What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches." Early was the message of redemption committed to writing that it might not fade out in frail human memories but become embodied in books and libraries and so be preserved and multiplied to the end of time.

Writing is the world's memory.

It stores up the accumulated thought of the past and transmits it to us. "Literature," says Victor Hugo, "secretes civilization." Beyond comparison the pen is mightier than the sword and the most potent instrument of our life.

This commission gives us an insight into the process by which and the purpose for which the Bible was made.

The word came from God through his Holy Spirit, but it was committed to men to put it into human shape and use.

This glorious vision was not vouchsafed to John for his private delectation, but it was only a means of service. God shows us his glory that we may show it to others. Ability measures responsibility. The more we receive the more we should give. No good thing is given unto us to be impounded, but to be imparted.

From every mount of revelation or transfiguration where we see heavenly visions and catch rare inspiration we should come down into the burdened and weary world, furnished and strengthened for better service.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. What is an apocalypse and what apocalyptic books are in the Bible?
2. What is the purpose of the Book of Revelation?
3. Is Christ more highly exalted for us than he was for John?
4. May we have visions?
5. What are the best written gospels we can write?

LESSON XII—DECEMBER 20

The Supreme Gift of Love. (Christmas Lesson)

Lesson: 1 John 4:7–19.

Golden Text: Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11.

Devotional Reading: John 15:12–17.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Why Jesus Came to Earth.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Gift of the Saviour.

Lesson Text: 1 John 4:7–19

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

12 No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us:

13 Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.

16 And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.

17 Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love, because he first loved us.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction.

1. ***God the Source of All Love.***
2. ***The Love of God Manifested in Christ.***
3. ***We Ought to Love One Another.***
4. ***Abiding in Love.***
5. ***Love Made Perfect.***

The three little letters of John manifestly bear the marks of the hand of the author of the Fourth Gospel and have always been ascribed to him. Theme and style are the same as though cut off of one web.

They are steeped in and brimming over with love and are a continuous exposition of John's own golden text in John 3:16.

They were written by John the apostle during his residence in and near Ephesus and their probable date is about the year 100 A.D. Love is the basic theme and John unfolds this into many variations after the manner of a symphony and it is truly a golden song.

1. God the Source of All Love

"Love is of God," says John, and this truth runs through all these letters and crops out at many points as their central teaching. God is the source of all things, for by him were all things made and without him was not anything made that was made.

So all streams run back to him as all rivers run back to their mountain springs, or all love streams from him as all light comes from the sun.

This basic fact at once raises the difficulty of the evil in the world: does it also come from God as its primal source?

Deep as this difficulty is which has troubled all thinking minds and the greatest religious prophets in all ages, yet the human heart instinctively rejects the view that ascribes hate as well as love to God and refers the evil in the world to man's own wayward will.

The sovereignty of our own wills can thwart the love of God and sow the world with "songs of hate" and all the perversities of our human kind. God permits evil, but does not cause it, and it would seem that he must permit it if he would let men be morally free and responsible. Evil is the price man must pay and that God himself must pay in order to have a moral world.

Waving this difficulty aside without fully explaining it, we return to our primitive faith that the source of all good is God himself.

As he spills the splendor of light through all his creation and bathes all worlds in its golden flood, so does he pour love through all his animate

creation and it comes out in the universal affection of parents for their offspring and in the play of young animals and the song of birds and the general gladness of the world.

But its chief manifestation is the love that everywhere springs up in the human heart and binds families together and weaves the world into a general web of good will. God has so constituted the human soul that it is capable of love and naturally begins to exercise it in all human relations.

In spite of the sad and even frightful exhibitions of hate, yet the broad fact of this world is human love and it comes from God.

2. The Love of God Manifested in Christ

The love of God shines through the natural world in unmistakable forms in its order and provisions for our life and in its beauty and sublimity which scarcely veil the face of an infinite Father. Yet these natural revelations are relatively dim and feeble and often seem to fall short of our needs and certain assurance.

"Is the universe friendly?" is a question that many profound minds and reverent hearts have asked with a sense of failure and of fainting. There are times when the heavens seem as brass over our heads and the earth as an iron machine or prison.

But there is one point in history where God was and is manifested in a form that bursts through and sweeps away these shadows of dimness and of doubt in an effulgence of light and love. "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Love is a spirit and a spirit cannot be seen by the senses but must have outward visible signs to make its presence known. Facial expression and bodily gesture, voice and speech, deeds of care and kindness, these are the means by which our love breaks through the veil of the flesh and reveals the inner spirit. How expressive and tender, intense and eloquent they often are as the very passion of the soul pours through them into other minds and hearts. It is this spirit of love that expresses itself in the most glorious forms of art in speech and poetry, song and symphony, picture and sculpture, rising into such supreme embodiments as the "In Memoriam" and the Taj Mahal.

God also has condescended or rather ascended to express his love in human form and flesh so that the Word of his love could speak to us as a father to his son and as a mother to her child.

Jesus is the visible manifestation of God so that all that Jesus did is God doing those identical things.

The whole life of Jesus is the expression of God's love as he went about doing good, forgiving and comforting the sinful and sorrowing, taking little children into his arms and blessing them, and never hurting anybody so much as by a hair of the head. The love of God burgeoned out in that life lived in Galilee as the life of the rosebush blooms out in the rose and the light of the sun reveals the inner splendor crowded at its core.

And this love of God in Christ was no cheap and easy and meaningless sentiment, as our manifestations of love often are, but was the costliest sacrifice possible surpassing that of the soldier on the battlefield or the mother laying down her life for her child or the martyr stepping into flames in devotion to his Lord. He did not overlook our sin and guilt in showing his love, but assumed its burden and underwent its atonement and cleansing that he might redeem us. God " sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," and this involved a sacrifice greater than we can know or conceive. " His dying crimson, like a robe, spread o'er his body on the tree," and the believer in his love can never forget or escape the sight of that sacrificial love.

It is, then, in the light of the face of Jesus Christ that we must see the love of God in all the manifestations of the world. In vain may we descry the love of the Infinite in " the suns and systems rolling past " until we see these in the light of Jesus Christ. Thus did and does God manifest his love to us.

> And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought.

3. We Ought to Love One Another

It is perilously easy and may be delightful to express and appreciate the love of God in theory or as a sentiment felt in esthetic and artistic forms of worship, and yet not translate it into character and deed, especially in relation to others.

The facility and pleasure with which we can substitute mere theory for practice in religion is one of its most subtle and greatest dangers.

Many are they that say, "Lord, Lord," and yet do not do the things the Lord commands. But in all fields theory is tested by practice, doctrine by deed, and a pound of practice is worth a ton of theory. The Bible never lets this point escape us, and is constantly warning us against this danger.

John interweaves practice with doctrine throughout this passage.

"Beloved, let us love one another." "If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

The light of the sun is the most splendid thing in the creation, but it serves small use if it is simply enjoyed for its beauty, though that is one of its great uses. But the sunlight reaches its true fruition only when it is transmuted into leaf and bud and blossom and ripens into fruit. The sun saturates and stimulates the orchard and wheatfield, but rosy apples and golden grain prove the hidden beauty of the sun and show their response to and proper use of its light. Sun and landscape answer to each other, and either without the other is shorn of its usefulness and glory.

The love of God is the light of his nature that should pervade our whole nature and kindle it into responsiveness and kinship to him. The love of God in us should at once become our love for one another and fill our whole world.

Just how to fulfil this universal love is not always easy to define and apply, but its main principle is plain enough. It manifests itself first in the love of family and kindred and friends and then it widens out into universal good will. It means that in all our relations with others, even to the outmost racial bounds of our human world, we shall try to know the truth and exercise justice and kindness and helpfulness at the various points of contact. It would seek to abate and eliminate all prejudice and injustice and unfairness and hatred. It would accord to all men the basic and universal rights of our common humanity.

It would turn the whole into one brotherhood.

It is plain that such love would be revolutionary in our world at many points, social, industrial, political, and international.

However, in looking at the matter in the large we must not overlook our neighbor and should begin with the one next to us in the home and office and community and by loving him irradiate the little spot around us and make the world a bit more loving and brighter where we are: then we may seek to widen this little circle until it encircles the earth.

4. Abiding in Love

Another practical point emphasized in this golden lyric on love is that we must abide in it. Six times "abide" or "abideth" is used in this passage, showing how important this point was in the mind of John.

Love may be a superficial and changeful experience that comes and goes with the fleeting states of mind and changing moods of the heart.

It is common enough for converts to begin the Christian life in a warm glow of love and enthusiasm, and then presently begin to lose interest and cool down and grow cold to the zero point. Even such evanescent love is not without value and may leave some embers that will again kindle into flame.

But this kind of love is not the spiritual energy that keeps the world warm and all life agoing. A country could not live on patriotism that is alive and shouts only on the Fourth of July, but it depends on the patriotism that discharges its civic duties and obeys the laws and pays its taxes the year through. Love must burn on the family altar through all the days, or it will begin to disintegrate and its bonds be broken.

Our love to God issuing in love to one another should have deep roots in the heart and be an abiding disposition and habit. It may be harder to love some people at one time than at another, but we should put our love to the test of abiding in it at all times and loving people whether or not they are lovely and love us.

5. Love Made Perfect

Love is a matter of degrees and growth and may go from one degree of strength and fulness and richness to another. John has a high test for perfect love: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

There are forms of fear that are necessary and good: safeguards of our life to keep us in the path of law and from doing wrong. But other kinds and the kind John has in mind grow out of our practical distrust of God's goodness and care.

If we loved him as we should we would know that he will keep us in all our ways and bring them to pass. Then we can lie down and sleep in storm or adversity for in such times "he giveth his beloved sleep." This gift and spirit of love in us will keep Christmas in our hearts and lives through all the year.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Have you had any personal experience that assures you of God's love for you?
2. Do you hate anybody?
3. Is the love of God better known and practiced inside of Christendom than outside of it?
4. How can we make our love for God and Christ more real?
5. What fears do you have and how can you get rid of them?

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 27

Review: The Spread of Christianity in Europe

Golden Text: The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Revelation 11:15.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 11:1–10.

Intermediate and Senior Topic: Christianity in the Roman World.

Topic for Young People and Adults: The Outreach of Christianity.

The closing Quarter of the year carries us from the Macedonian cry that called Paul over into Europe to the last page he penned just before he paid the supreme devotion to his faith.

1. The Macedonian Call

We pick up the thread of Paul's second missionary journey when he found his way to Troas on the Ægean sea and heard the voice calling from the European shore. The voice called in a vision in the night, a common way in which divine messages were then communicated, and our dreams may sometimes have deeper meaning than we suspect.

This Macedonian was a representative man and his call was the pathetic cry of the pagan world.

> **This man is still out there in the twilight of the heathen world calling to us, only he has moved on and now stands on other shores around the world.**
>
> **The Christian and the church are deaf to the call of the Spirit that cannot hear this cry.**

Paul hastened to obey and presently he was at a prayer meeting by a riverside at Philippi, where he won his first convert, who was Lydia the purple seller, so that the "man of Macedonia" turned out to be a woman, and woman is yet generally the first in pagan lands to receive the gospel.

At this point we are given a leaf from one of Paul's letters which throws much light into his work as a missionary.

2. Paul at Philippi

Paul won a second convert at Philippi under very different circumstances from those in which the first one was converted. The first was a woman, and the second was a man; the first was a storekeeper and the second was a jailer: the gospel knows no distinction of sex or of class or condition, but appeals to all people.

The conversion of Lydia was followed by the action of a mob who were incensed at the missionaries for interfering with their trade by curing a demon-possessed fortune-telling girl, and they raised a cry against them that soon put them in jail.

Here Paul and Barnabas held a midnight prayer meeting and in the midst of it an earthquake shook the rocky walls of the prison and unloosed the prisoners.

God was in that earthquake as he may be in the earthquake of loss or sorrow that shakes our lives.

The jailer was instantly alarmed and presently cried out what he must do to be saved.

Paul answered in the nick of time with a compact and thrilling command that brought immediate salvation.

All are not saved in the same way, and here we have the quiet and orderly conversion of Lydia followed by the earthquake conversion of the jailer.

3. Paul in Thessalonica and Berœa

From the rough treatment they received at Philippi the missionaries, nothing discouraged, proceeded to Thessalonica, where Paul began preaching in the synagogue. He reasoned, for Paul was always a reasoner and never a mere ranter, with the result that some were persuaded but others were moved with jealousy and would not believe.

This is a fundamental division that separates people in every place where the gospel is preached and we must respect the sovereignty of conscience and the human will.

The unbelieving Jews gathered a rabble and charged the missionaries with turning the world upside down, a charge that was false in the sense intended but expressed a deeper truth than they suspected. They also charged that the missionaries were saying that there is another king, one

Jesus—which like the former charge was false in intent but true in spirit.

Paul and Silas passed on to Berœa where they had a pleasant surprise in that the Berœans searched the Scriptures and determined for themselves whether the message of the missionaries was true—a fine instance of the exercise of the scientific spirit of truth seeking.

4. Paul in Corinth

We next find Paul in Corinth, having passed through Athens where he preached only a single sermon with small results, and in this center of Greek commerce and wealth and vice, he resorted to his trade as a tent-maker to support himself by night while by day he preached the gospel. He found companionship and lodgings with Aquila and Priscilla, also tent-makers, who became converts and assisted Paul.

The usual opposition to his preaching arose in the synagogue and he went outside to carry on his work, the ruler of the synagogue himself becoming one of his converts. These converts, we learn from one of Paul's letters to this church (1 Cor. 6:9-11), were a bad lot from the lowest classes of the city, but the grace of Christ could wash them clean, as it is doing the same work to this day.

Paul fell into despondency in this city, possibly over its wickedness, but he was cheered and sustained by a special visitation of the Lord.

It was revealed to him that the Lord had "much people in this city," and it is a comforting assurance to us that God has in our city and in the great world more of his people than we know or may think.

5. World's Temperance Sunday

Paul's letter to the Galatians was probably the first letter he wrote and its object was to free his converts in the churches he had found in Galatia in his first missionary journey from the yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies, especially of circumcision, which certain Judaizers, Christian Jews who held that Christianity was only a form of Judaism, were trying to fasten on these converts.

Paul's trumpet blast against these Judaizers was, "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage."

Yet he made it plain that this freedom did not set them free from the moral and spiritual laws of Moses so that these converts were not to use their freedom "for an occasion to the flesh."

He explains the dangers of the flesh to the spirit and warns against fulfilling the desires of appetite and passion when at war with the spirit.

The fruits of the spirit are enumerated and enjoined and he shows that union with the crucified Christ will enable us to crucify the rebellious flesh.

6. Paul in Ephesus

From Corinth Paul returned to Jerusalem and now we find him out on his third missionary journey at work in the great city of Ephesus. As usual he began in the synagogue and was permitted to preach in it for three months.

Some strolling Jewish exorcists tried their hand at imitating him, and two of them were set upon by one of their own frenzied victims.

Such religious quacks abounded in that day and we have not seen the end of them yet.

The result of this failure was that fear moved many and they came confessing their evil deeds.

In proof of their conversion they brought their books of magic and burned them in a heap. Such books have an underground circulation and sale in our cities and it is almost unbelievable how many people buy and have faith in them.

If all the bad books and other instruments of evil were piled up in a heap and burned they would make a tremendous conflagration. If you have any of them, burn them.

7. Paul in Jerusalem

From his third missionary journey, in which he passed from Ephesus around through Macedonia to Corinth visiting his churches, Paul returned to Jerusalem. Here he was seen in the temple by some Asiatic Jews who raised against him the cry that he had brought Greeks into the temple to defile it.

A mob rose against him, but he was rescued by Roman soldiers who were stationed in a garrison in the Tower of Antonia in the temple area.

On the stairway leading up to the Roman captain's quarters an interesting conversation took place between the captain and Paul in which the soldier discovered that Paul was a citizen of a Greek city and therefore not to be mistreated. Paul then requested that he might speak to the frenzied mob shouting for his life and this was granted him.

His speech was a notable one in which he maintained that he was not a traitor to his own people, but it availed nothing.

When the captain discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen he treated him in a very different way. This fact started Paul on his way to Rome.

8. Paul in Rome

At last we find Paul in Rome, brought bound as a prisoner.

The prisoner was bound, but the preacher was free.

Paul proceeded to give account of himself to the Jewish community in Rome, and they reported that they had received no reports against him but that they knew that Christianity was a sect everywhere spoken against. Paul preached an all-day sermon, but even this inordinate length did not persuade all of them and "some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved."

Paul then turned from the Jews to the Gentiles: "they will also hear," he said.

When the gospel is refused at one point we are to seek an entrance for it at another, for there will always be some that will hear.

At this point Luke abruptly closes the book of Acts, doubtless because nothing more had yet happened and there was nothing more to say. However tradition pieces out the record by releasing Paul from this first imprisonment for further service, possibly in Spain, and then he is brought back a second time and his hand stops writing when it lies still on the blood-stained sand.

9. Paul's Letter to Philemon

This is one of the letters Paul wrote during his imprisonment, and while it is only a brief personal note it is yet one of the important and weighty books of the Bible.

It is the story of Onesimus, a thief and runaway slave who had robbed

and escaped from his master Philemon, at Colosse near Ephesus, one of Paul's converts and a personal friend.

Paul found Onesimus in Rome and brought him to Christ, and then sent him back to his owner bearing this little letter.

The letter pleads with Philemon to receive his slave but as a Christian brother. He does not ask for his manumission, but he hints at it in such winsome terms that we may feel sure his request was granted.

This letter did not strike the fetters off the slave violently, but it did breathe forth such a spirit of brotherhood as in time dissolved these bonds and helped to set the slave free everywhere in the Christian world.

10. Rome and Beyond

This is another letter written in Rome during Paul's second imprisonment.

It is a letter of instruction and admonition of Paul the aged to one of his young converts now an evangelist.

It gives him a solemn charge, to preach the word, warns him of an impending defection from the faith, speaks of himself as being already offered, is triumphant in view of receiving his crown of righteousness, and closes with a few personal notes and final words that show how human the great apostle was to the last.

11. John's Vision on Patmos

The Revelation of John is a strange and often mystifying book to us, but it was plain enough to its first readers.

It is a panorama of the battlefield of good and evil through the ages, starting in John's own day and running on to the end of time.

He also was a prisoner, working in the copper mines of Patmos, but he was in the spirit on the Lord's day and saw a splendid vision in which the glorified Christ was the central and dominating figure. He was smitten by the sight so that he fell as one dead, but he was commanded to write the things he had seen, and they contain much encouragement and inspiration for us.

12. The Supreme Gift of Love

For a Christmas lesson we are given a passage out of John's First Epistle which is a lyric on love comparable to Paul's in 1 Cor. 13.

Love is traced to God as its original fountain whence all the love in the world flows.

It is supremely manifested in Christ who gave himself for us, and we are to abide in this love, and in all things "let us love one another."

This will put Christmas in our hearts the year through.

Suggestive Questions and Topics

1. Give a running sketch of Paul's life from Troas to its close in Rome.
2. What are some outstanding characteristics of Paul?
3. What is the value of Paul's letters?
4. Did Paul make Christianity, or did Christianity make Paul?
5. What does Europe owe to Paul today?

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